





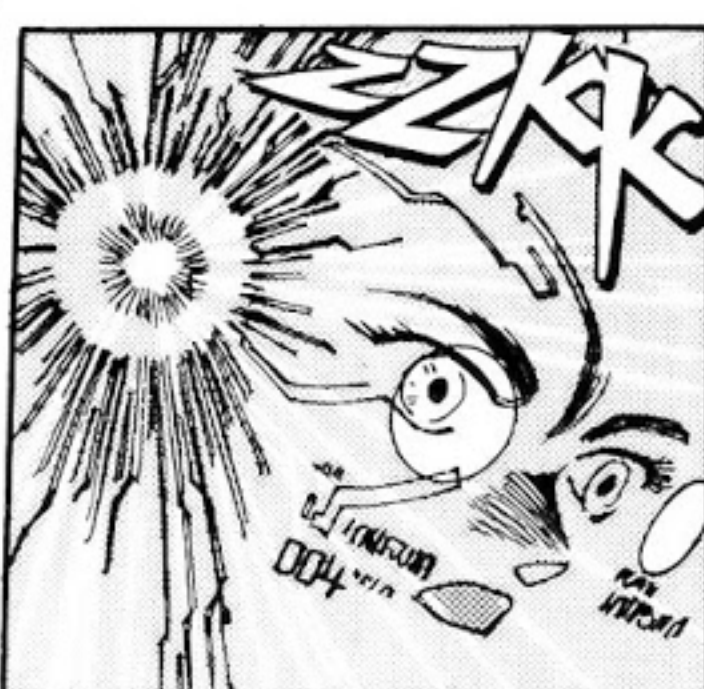
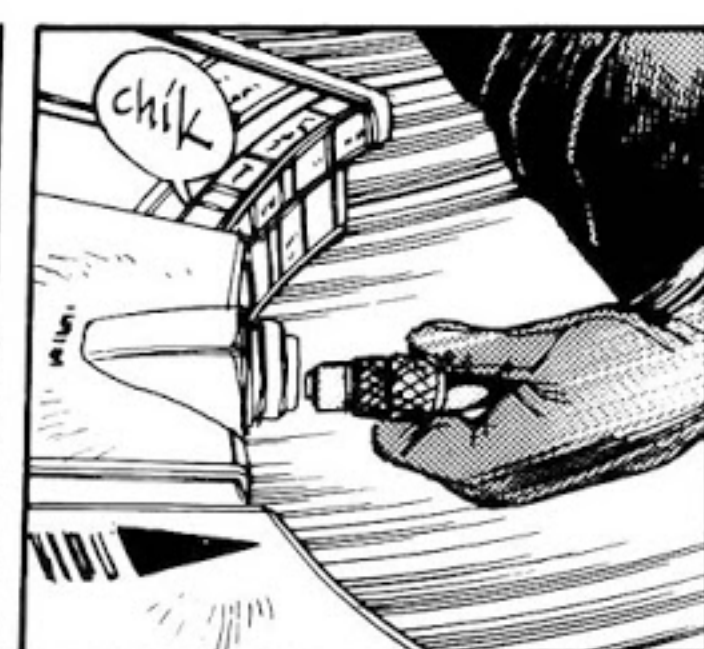
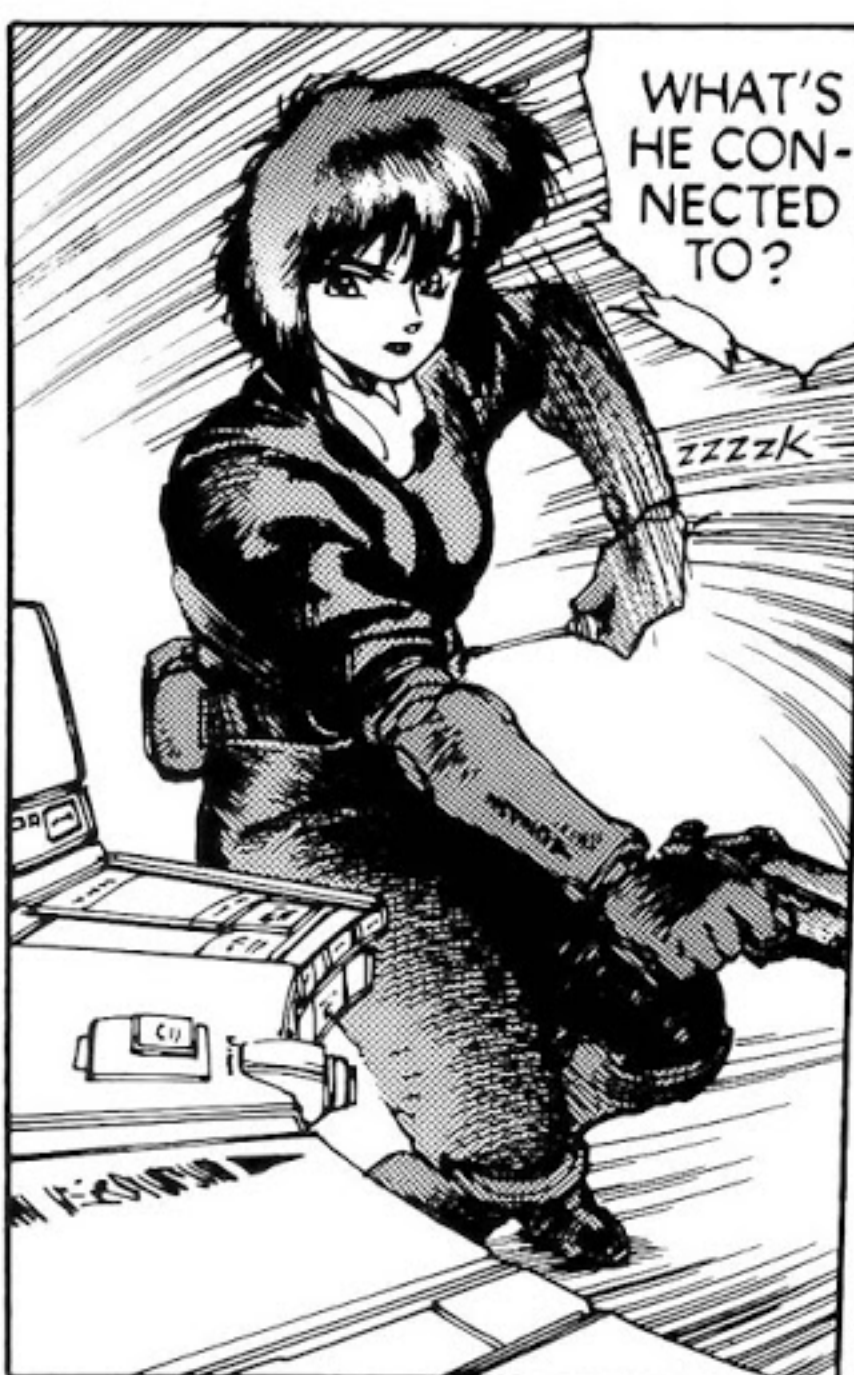
LISTEN TO ME! THERE'S NO RADIATION LEAK, SO DO AS I SAY!



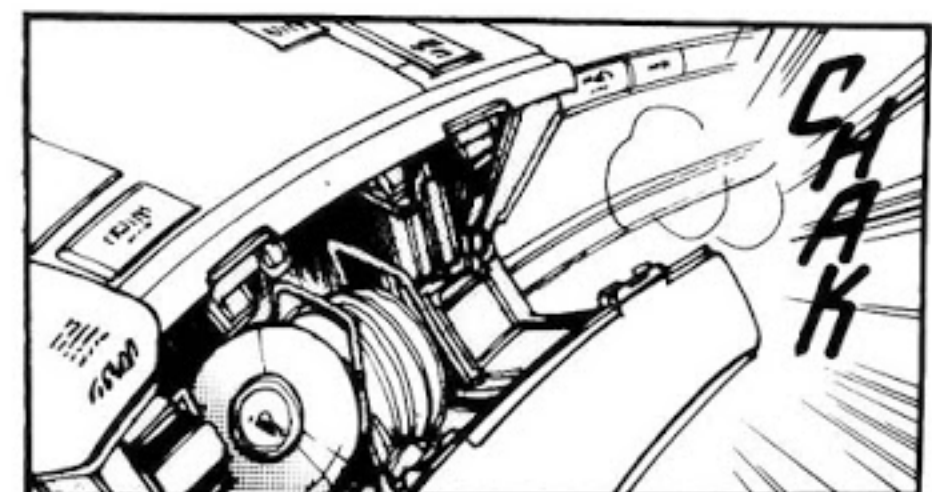
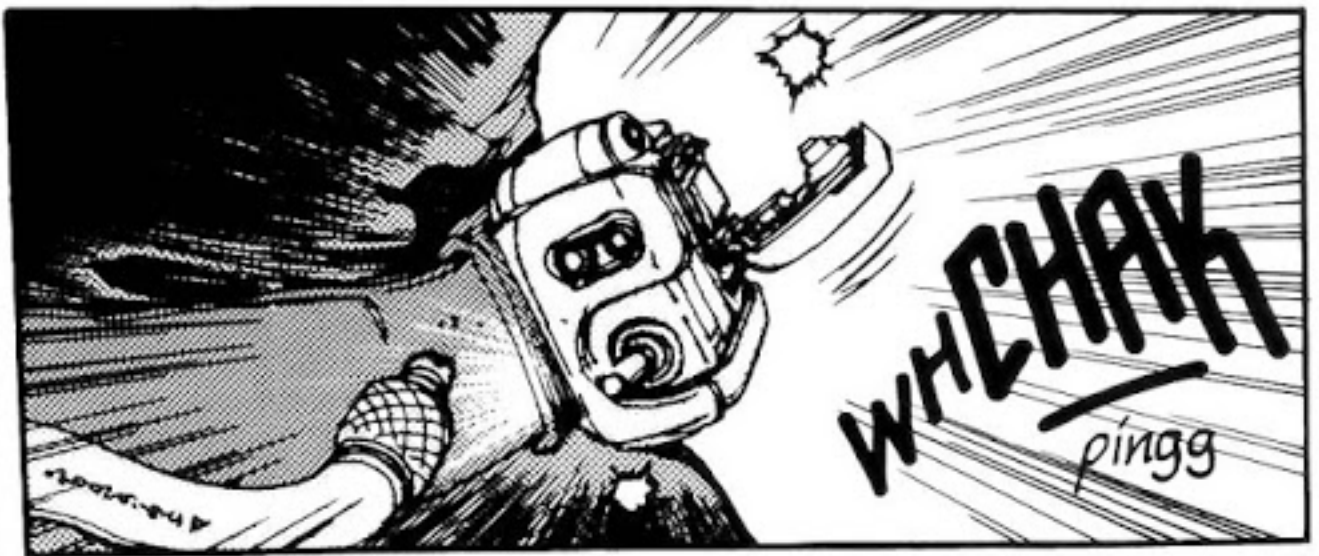
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR JOB, PATCH THE DEMOLITION CHARGES OVER TO ME! I'M GOING TO BLOW THE WHOLE SECTION!



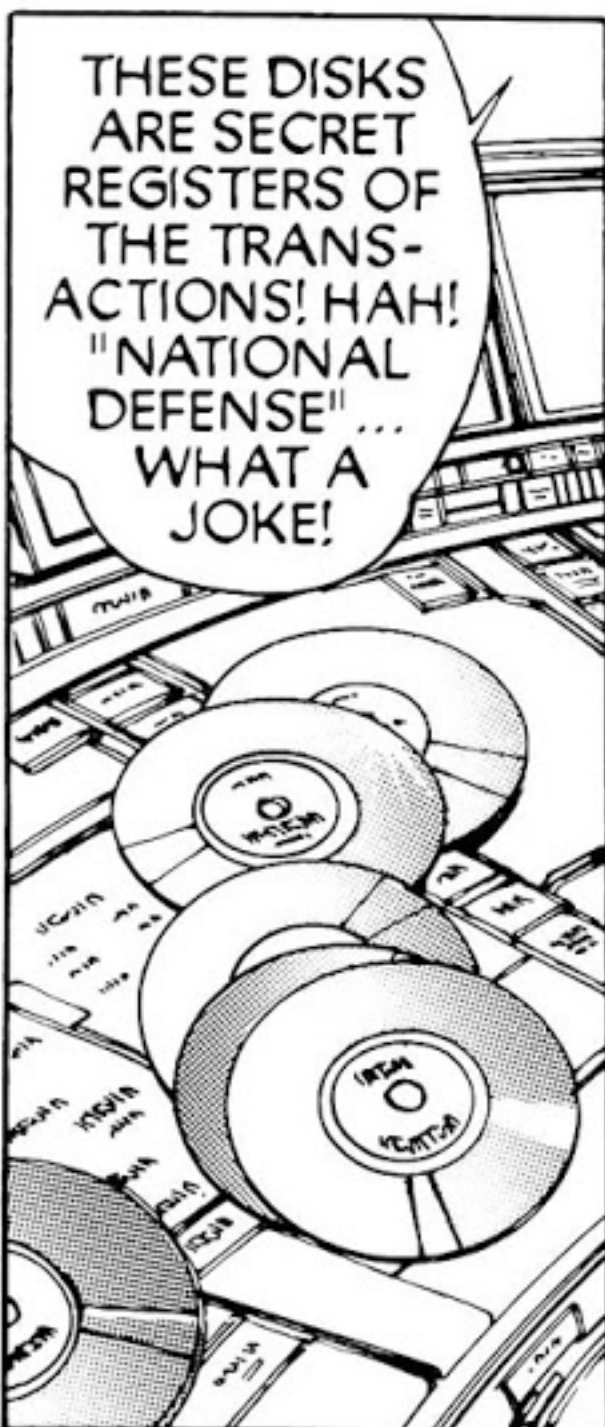
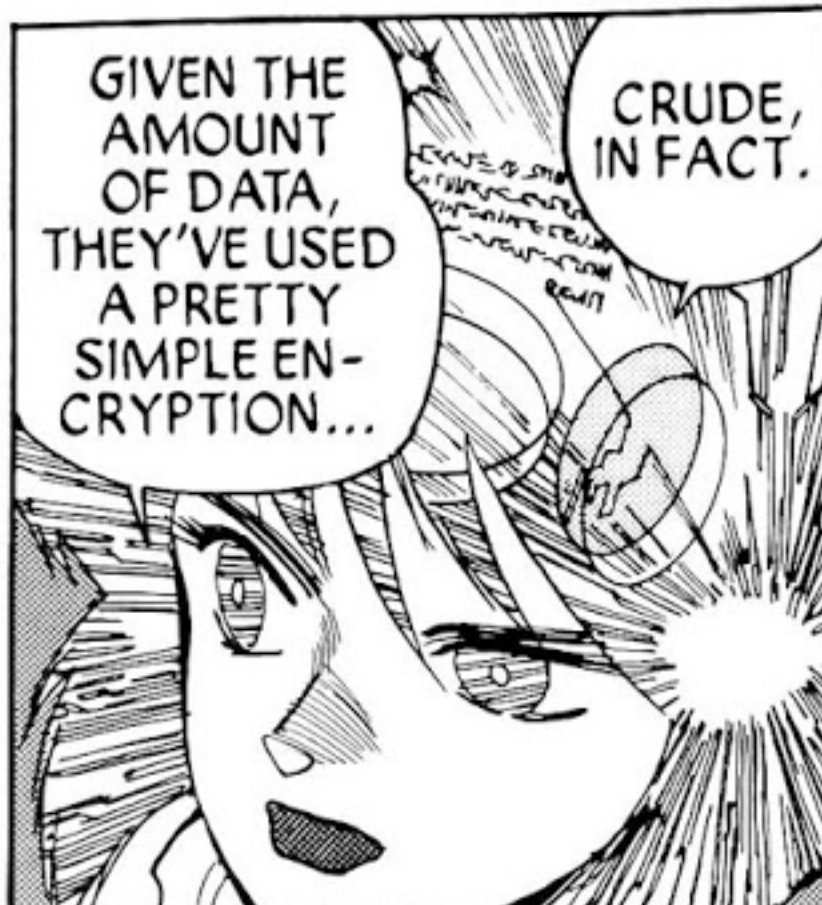
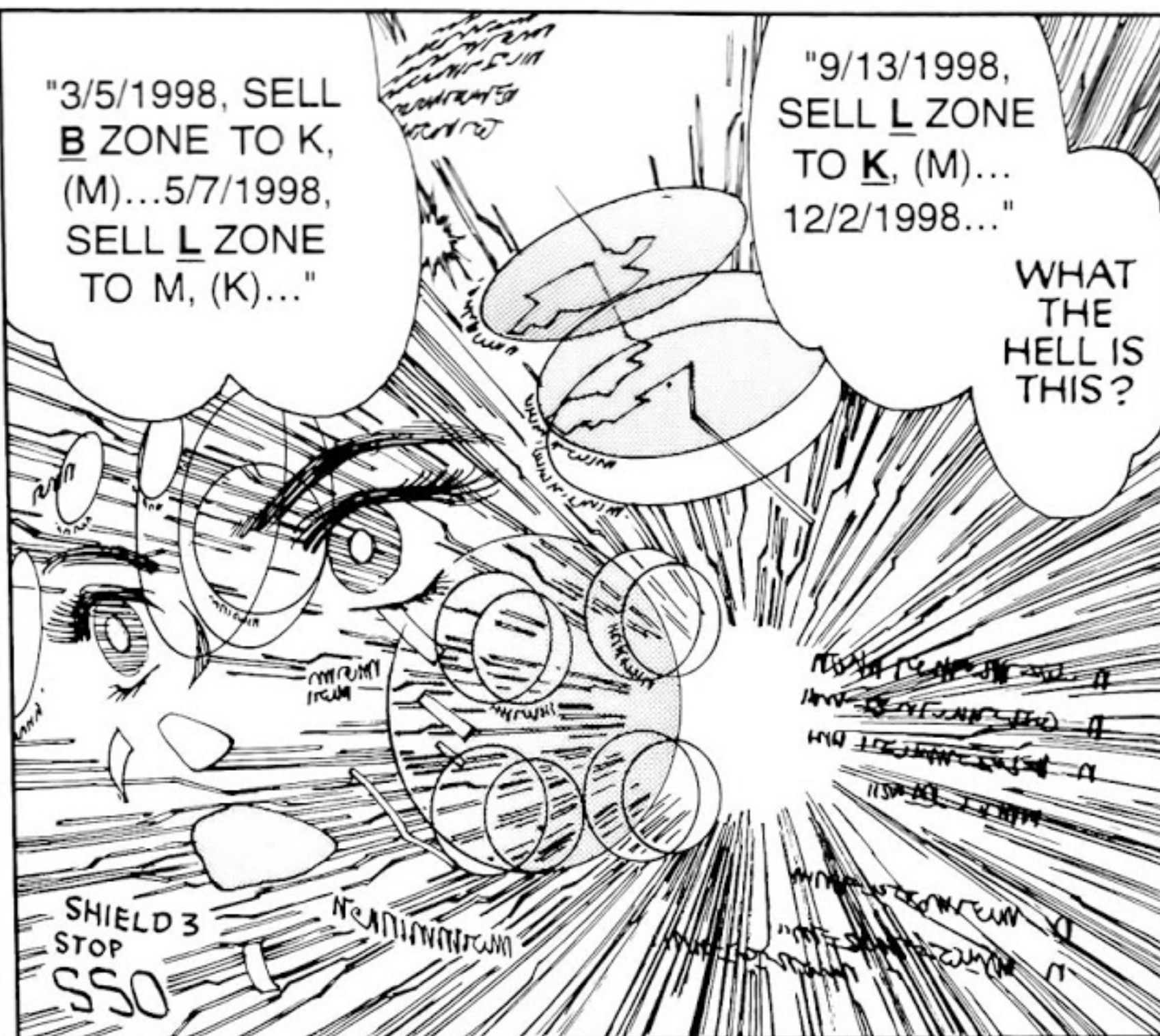
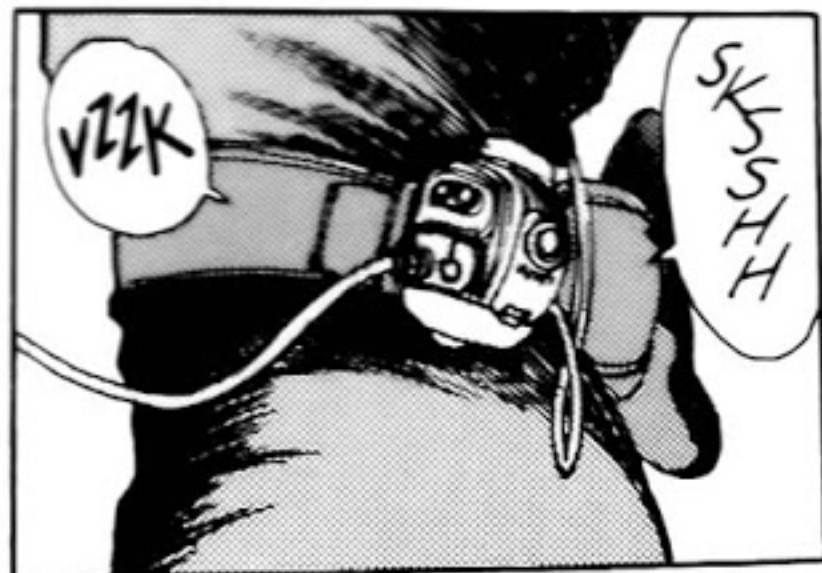








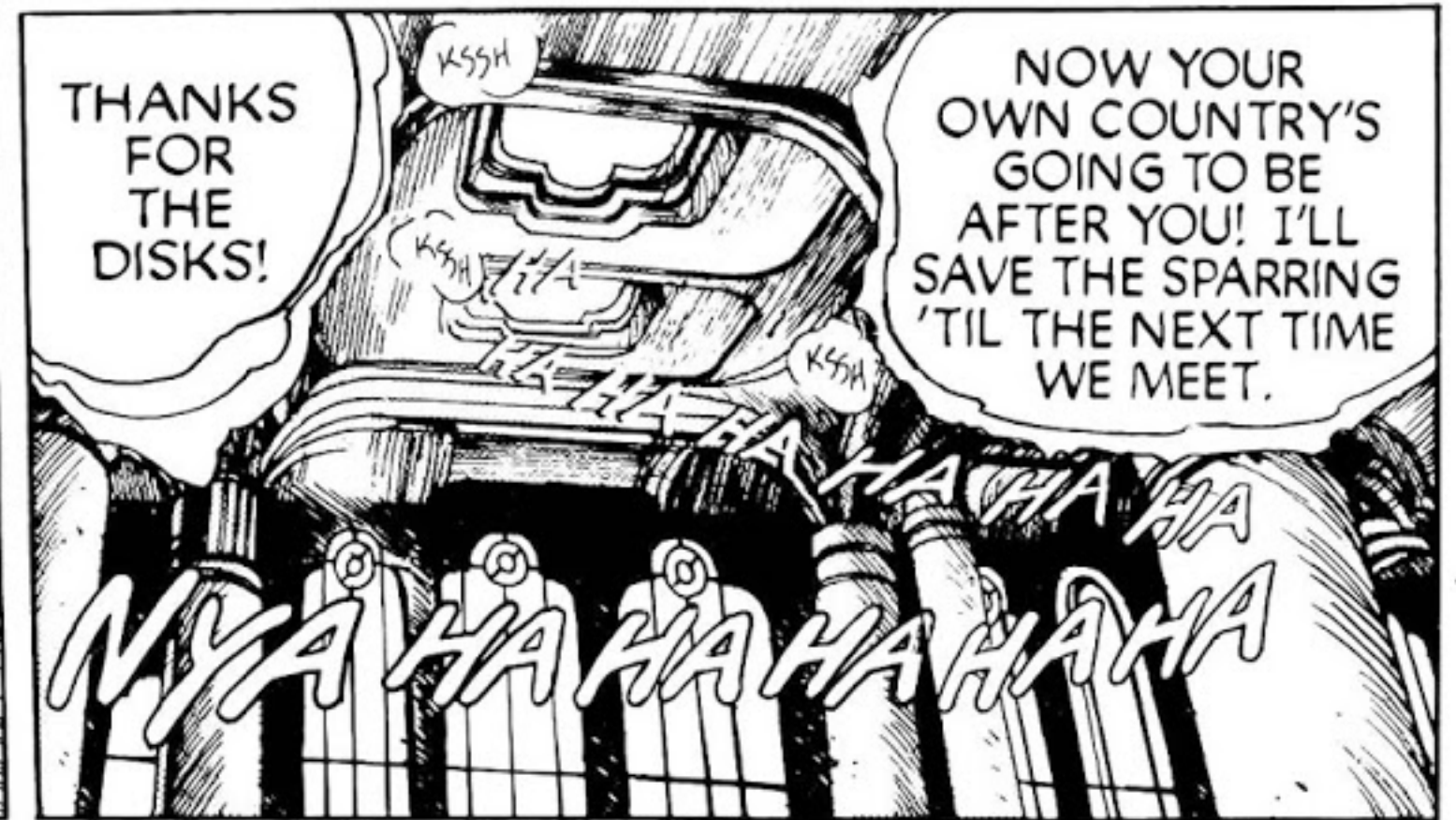








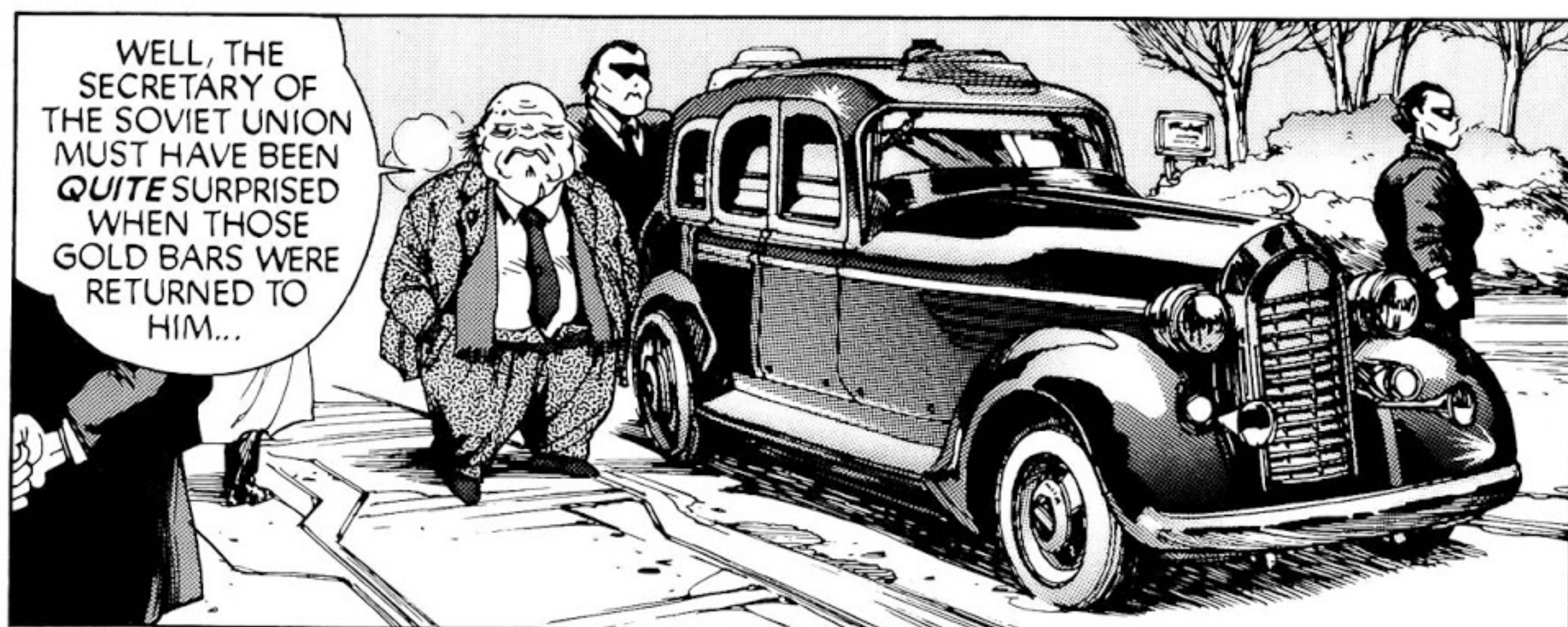
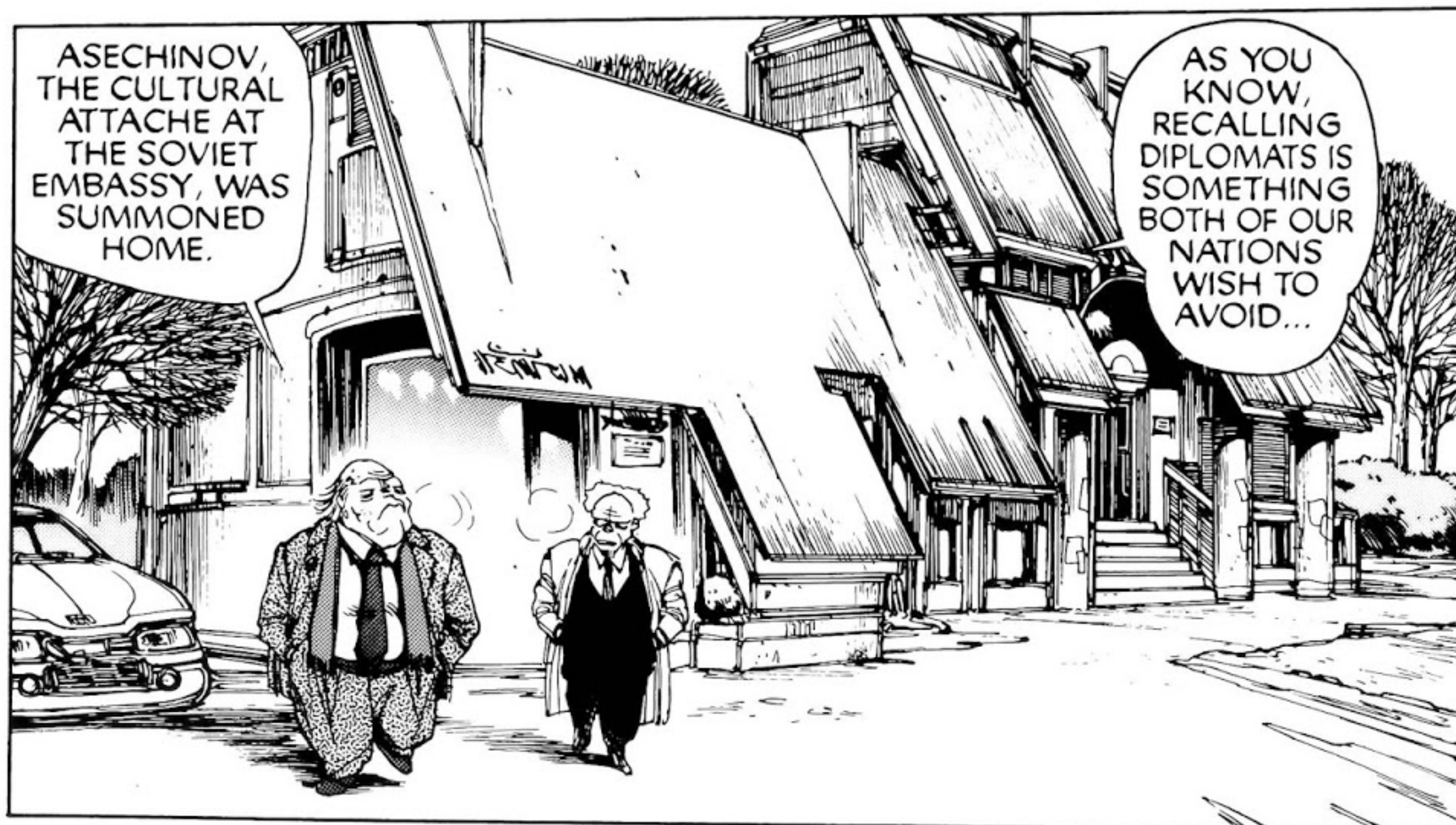
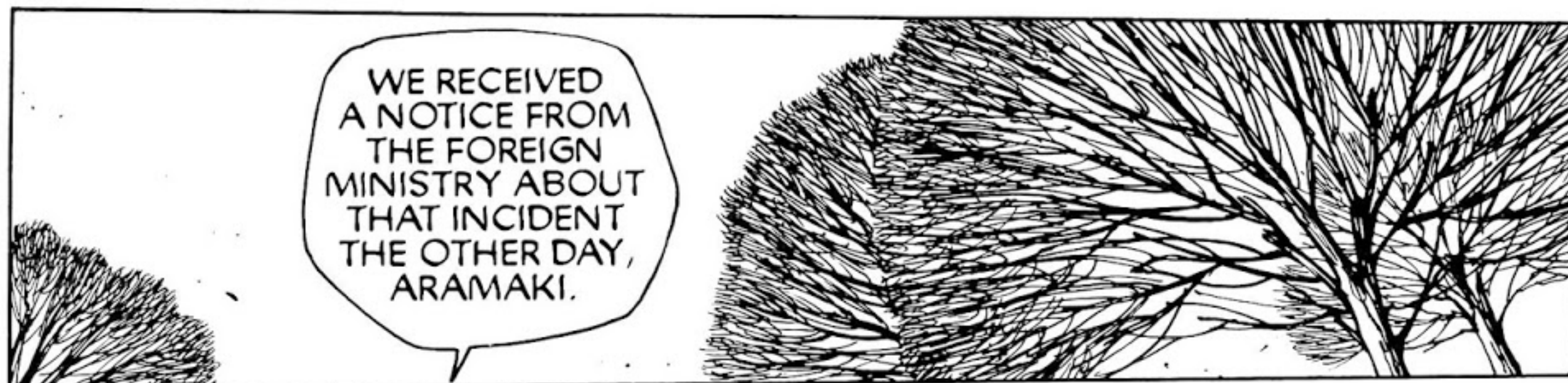




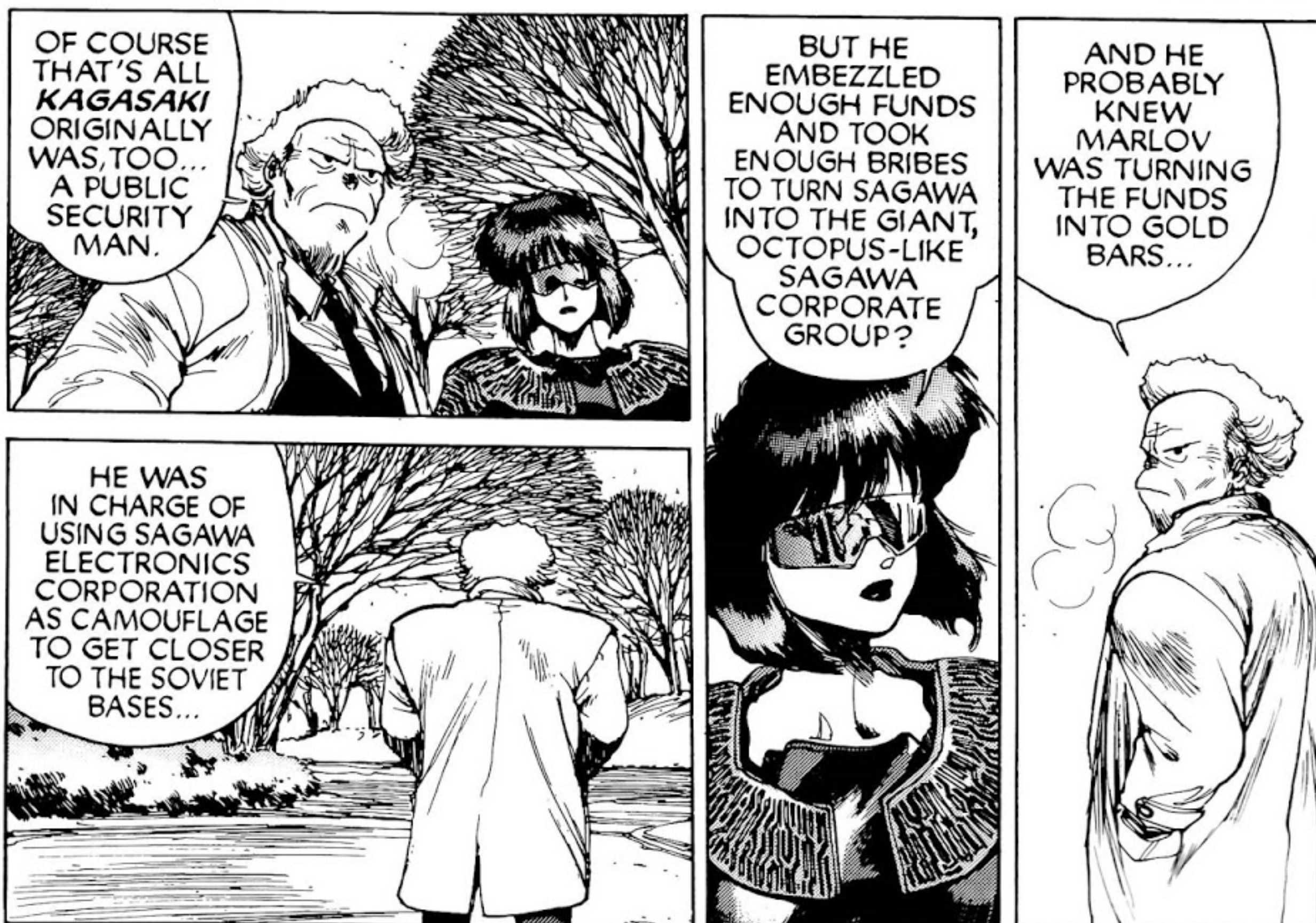
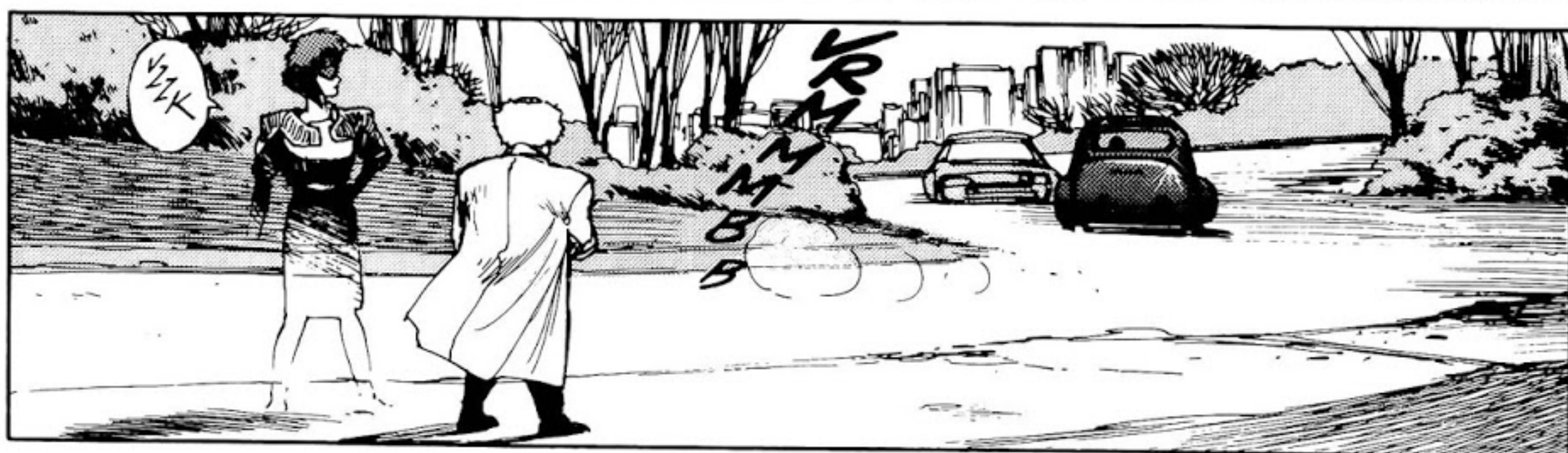
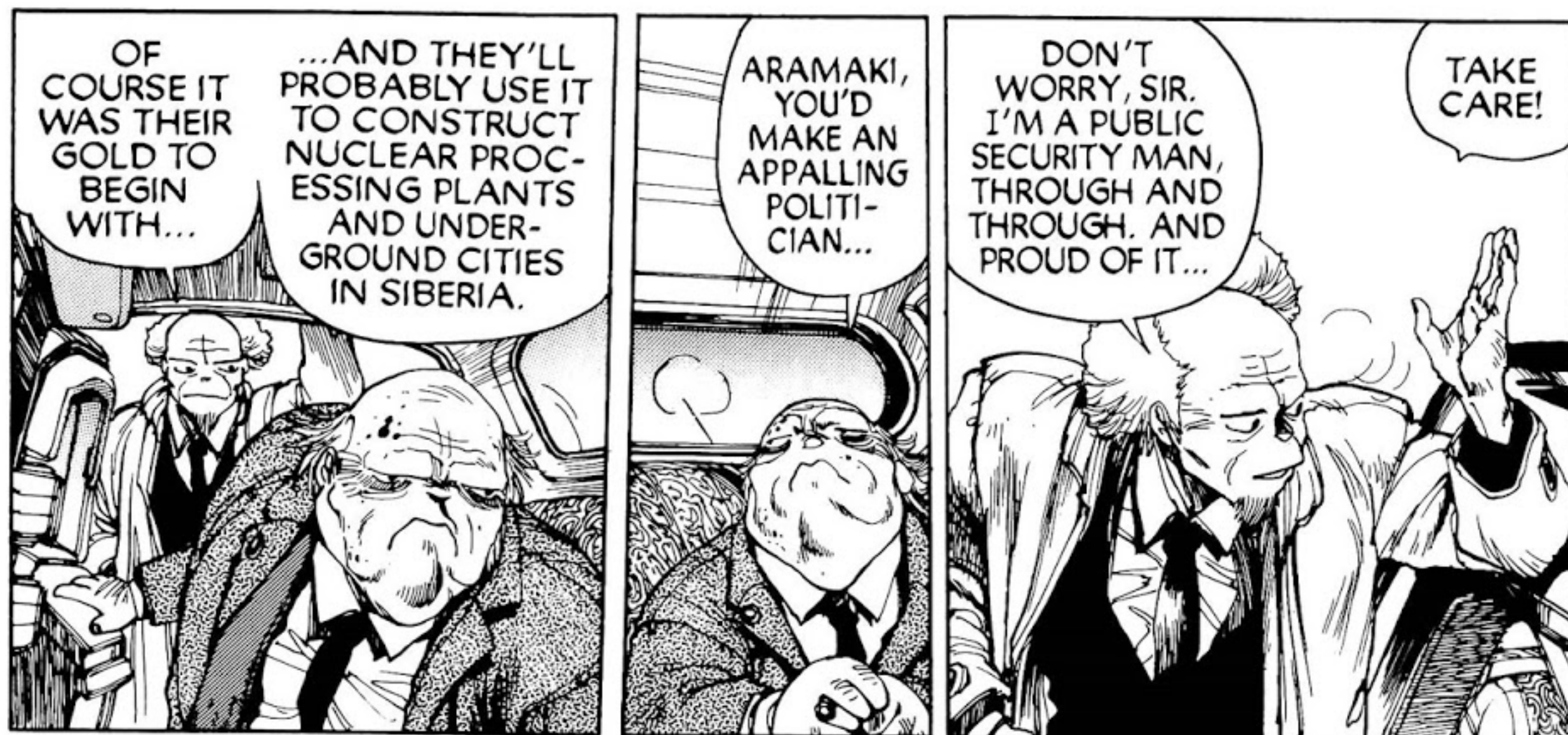




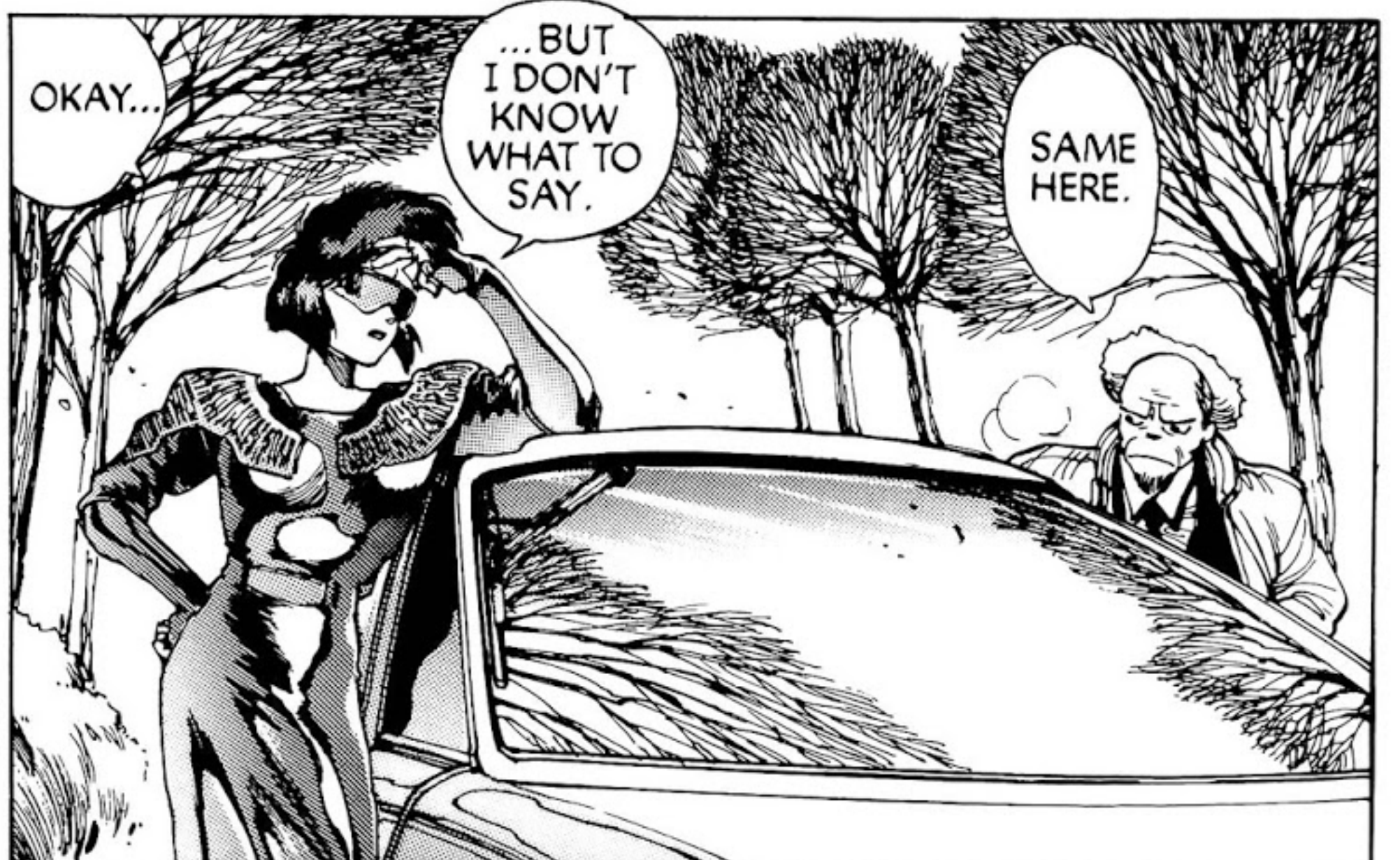
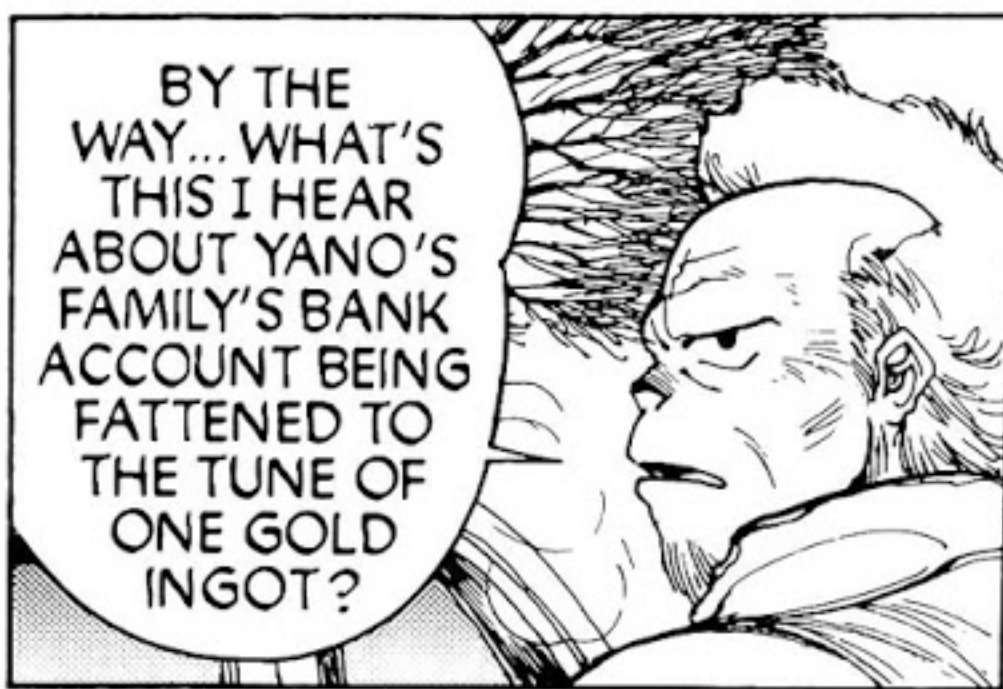




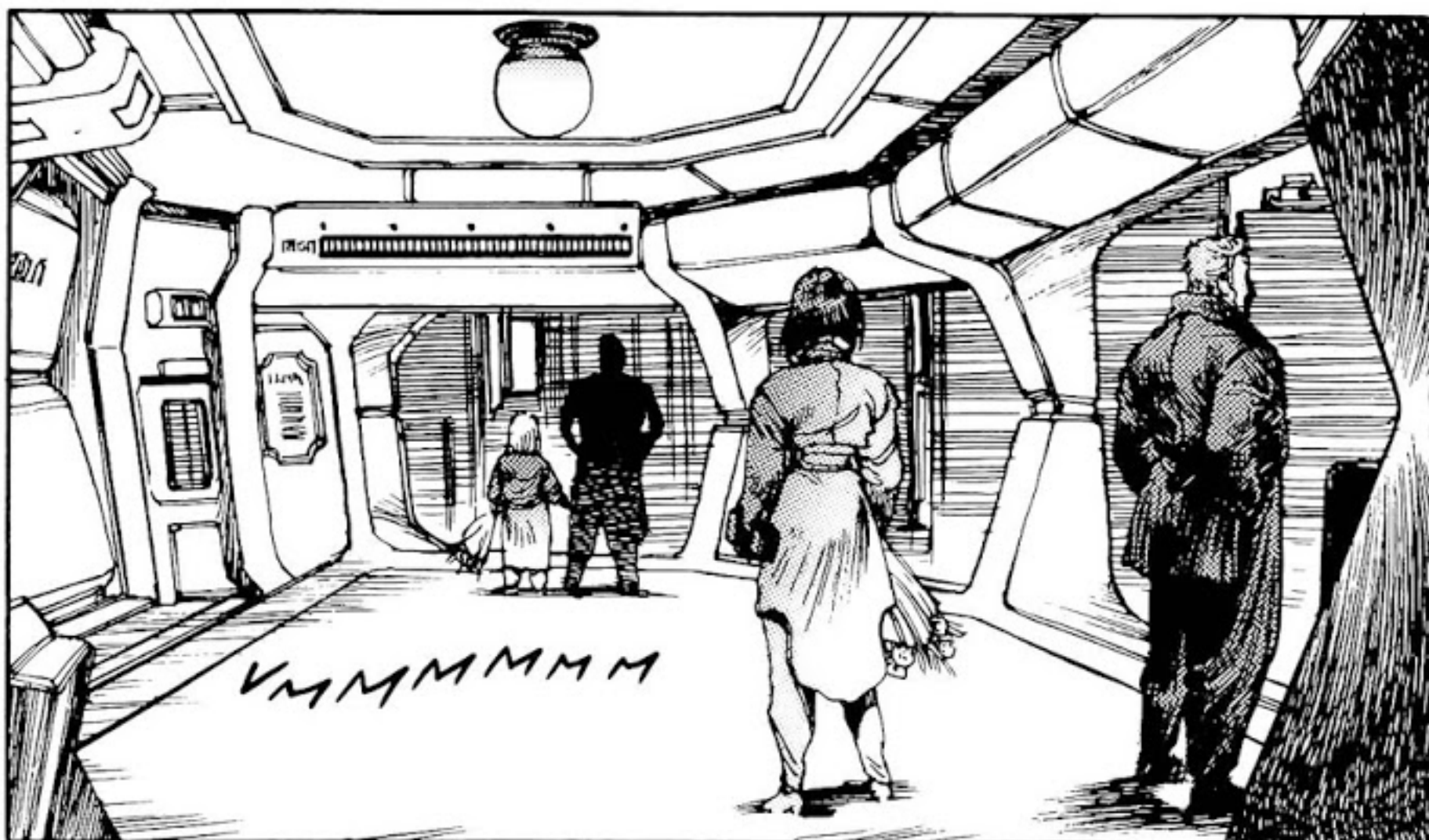
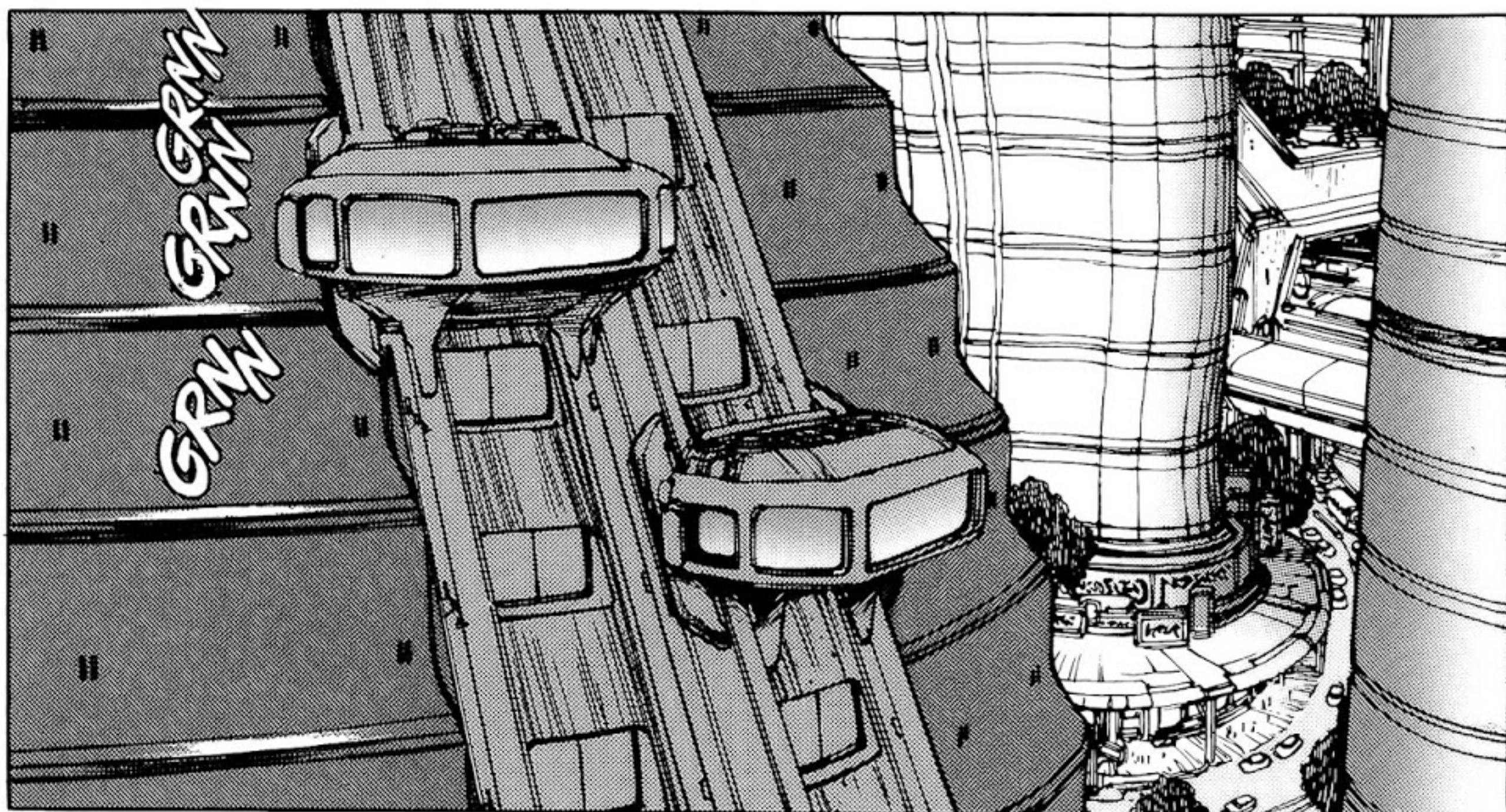




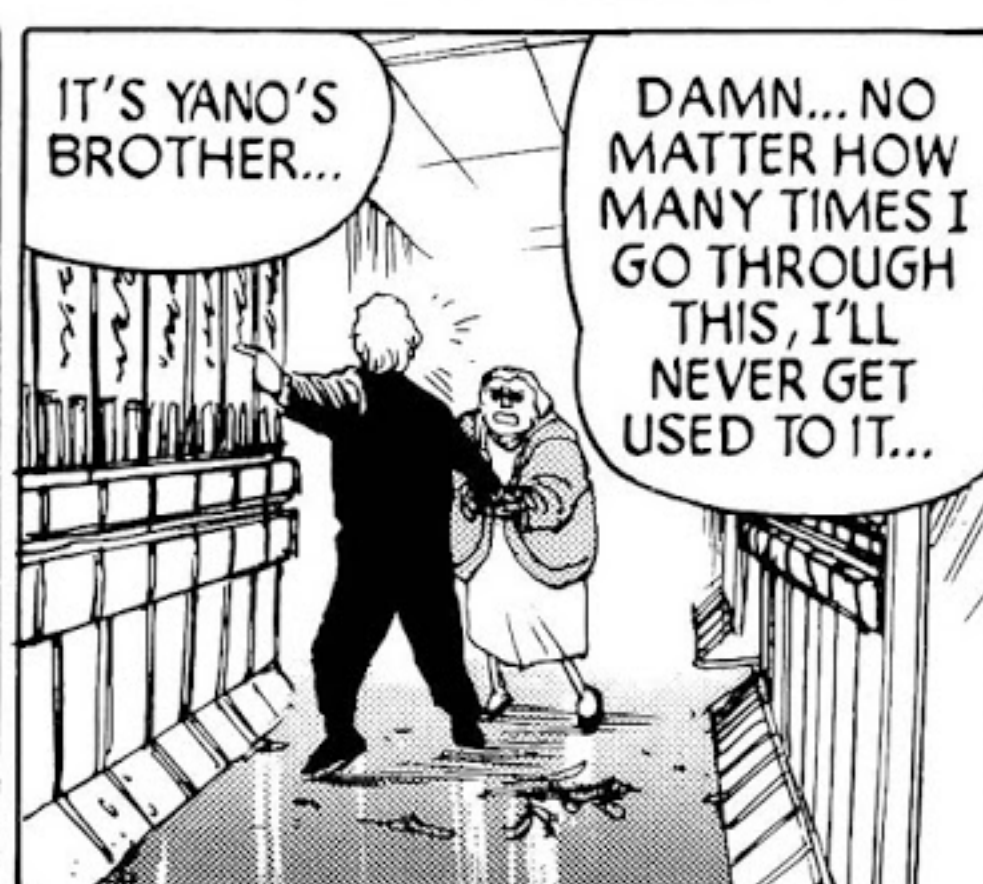
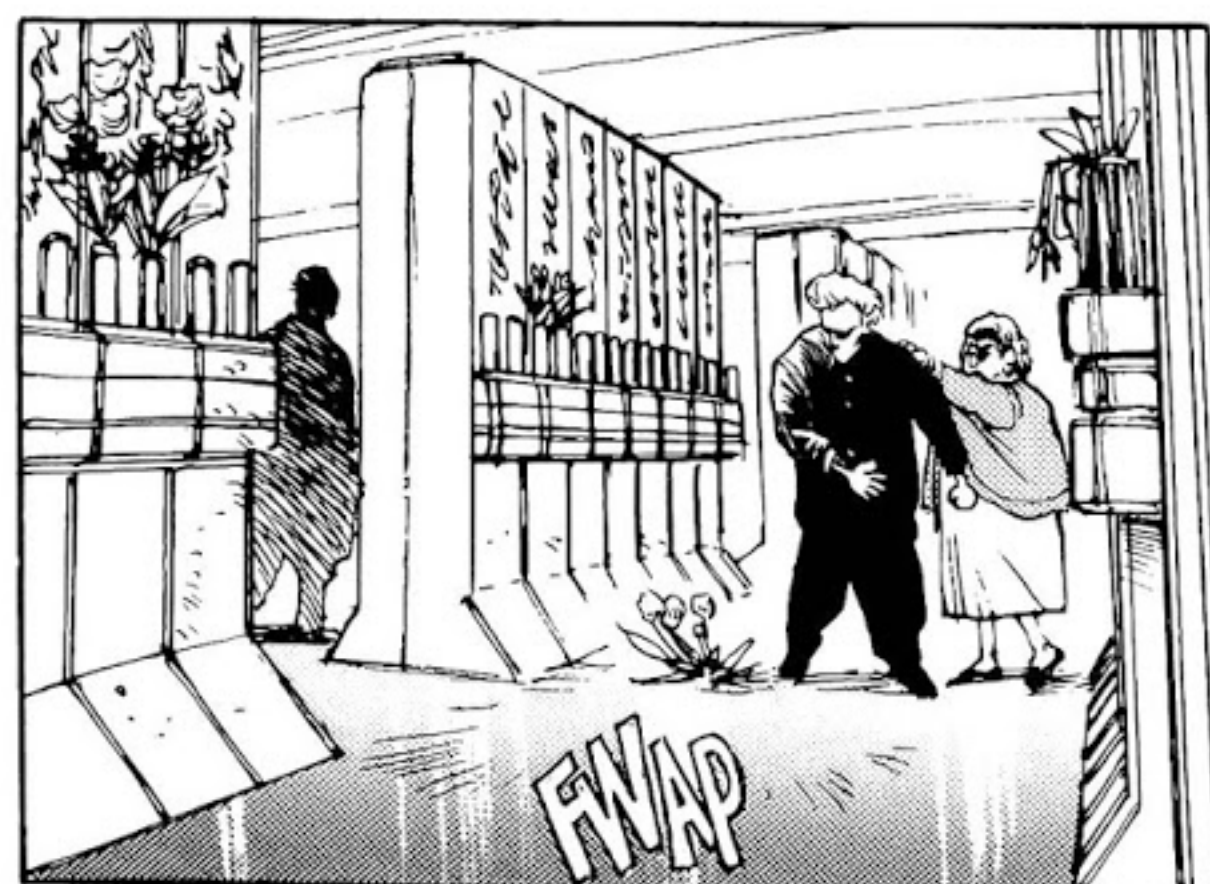










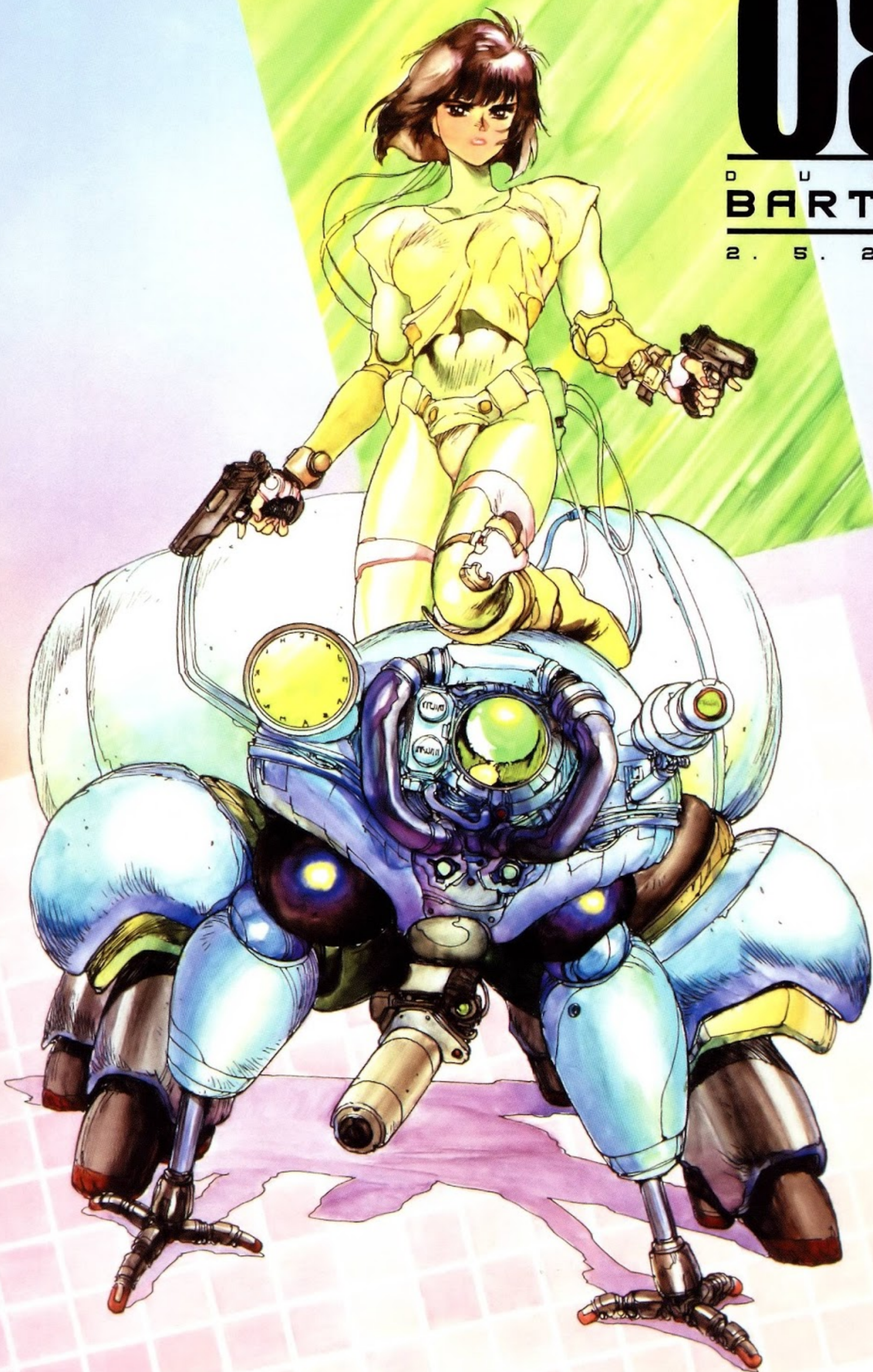




# 08

D U M B  
**BARTER**

2 . 5 . 2 0 3 0







OKAY, MR. SOMA... WE'RE INJECTING SEVERAL CLUSTERS OF MICRO-MACHINE **B** PARTS INTO THE LATERAL AND POSTERIOR ASPECTS OF YOUR BRAIN...

FEEL ANY PAIN AROUND THE BRAIN, HON?

NOTE: THE BRAIN ITSELF CANNOT FEEL PAIN.



WHY'D YA THINK I ASKED FOR SOME GODDAMN PAIN-KILLERS?!



IMPELLED BY VAN DER WAALS' FORCES, SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE **B** PARTS WILL UNDERGO REVERSIBLE ADSORPTION AT THE SITE WHERE WE INJECTED THE **A** PARTS EARLIER. WITHIN MICRO-SECONDS, THEY WILL SYNTHESIZE POLYMERS, UNDERGO IONIC BONDING, AND ANCHOR THEMSELVES....

IF YOU PAY FOR ALL OF 'EM...

THIS MACHINE INJECTS MICROMACHINES USING THE FORCE OF THEIR ELECTRICAL CHARGES...



SO HOW ABOUT A REFUND ON THE OTHER THIRTY PERCENT?!

IF THE PATTERN CONTROL IS TOO TIGHT, THE SYSTEM WON'T WORK OPTIMALLY. IT REQUIRES THAT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SLACK BE BUILT IN, SIR!

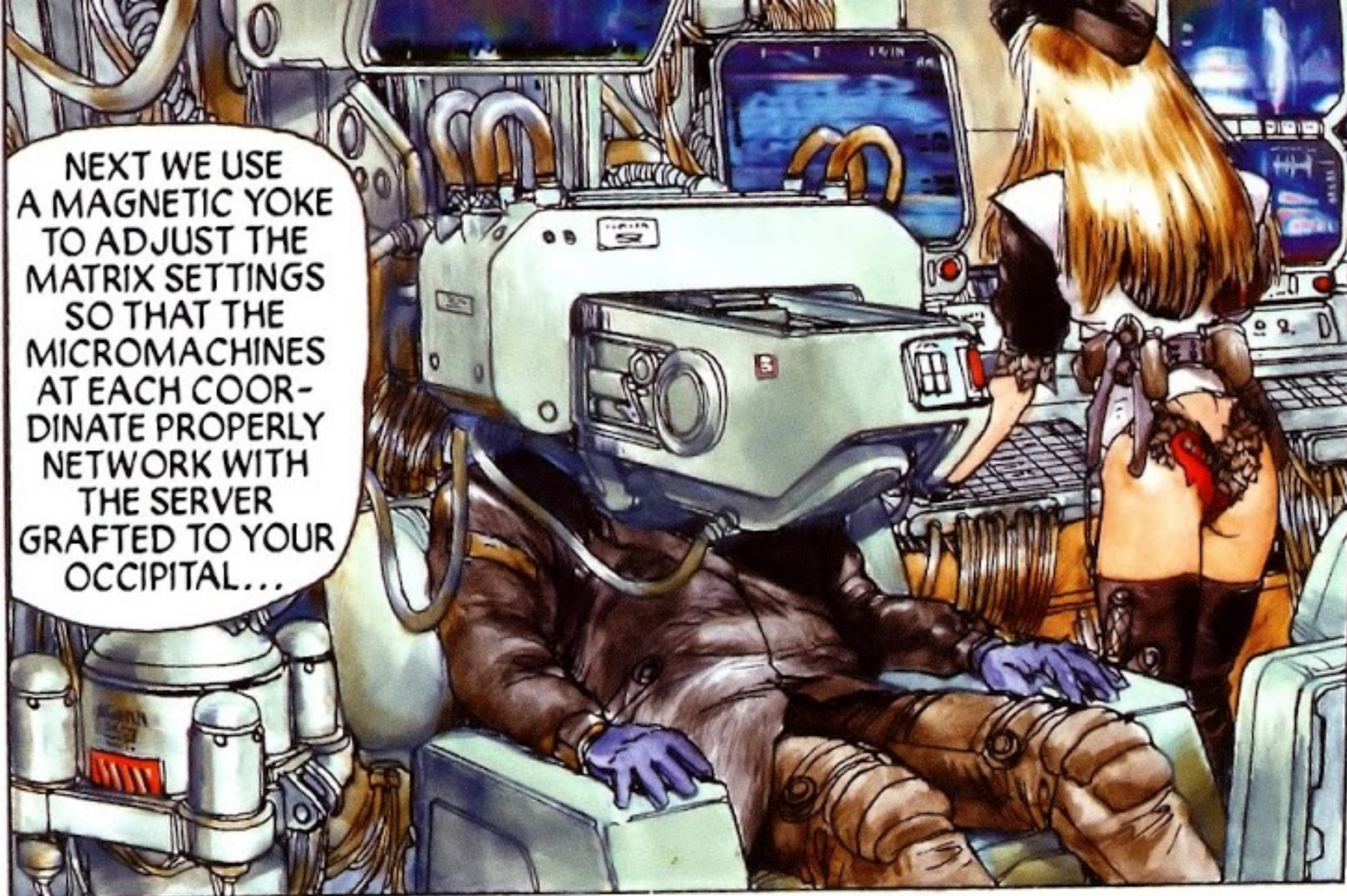
AREN'T YOU GOING TO REMOVE THE OLD MICRO-MACHINES?

NOT WHEN THEY'RE AS ANCHORED AS THEY ARE IN YOUR CASE. IF WE TRIED TO STRIP THEM OUT, YOU'D LOSE QUITE A FEW BRAIN CELLS.

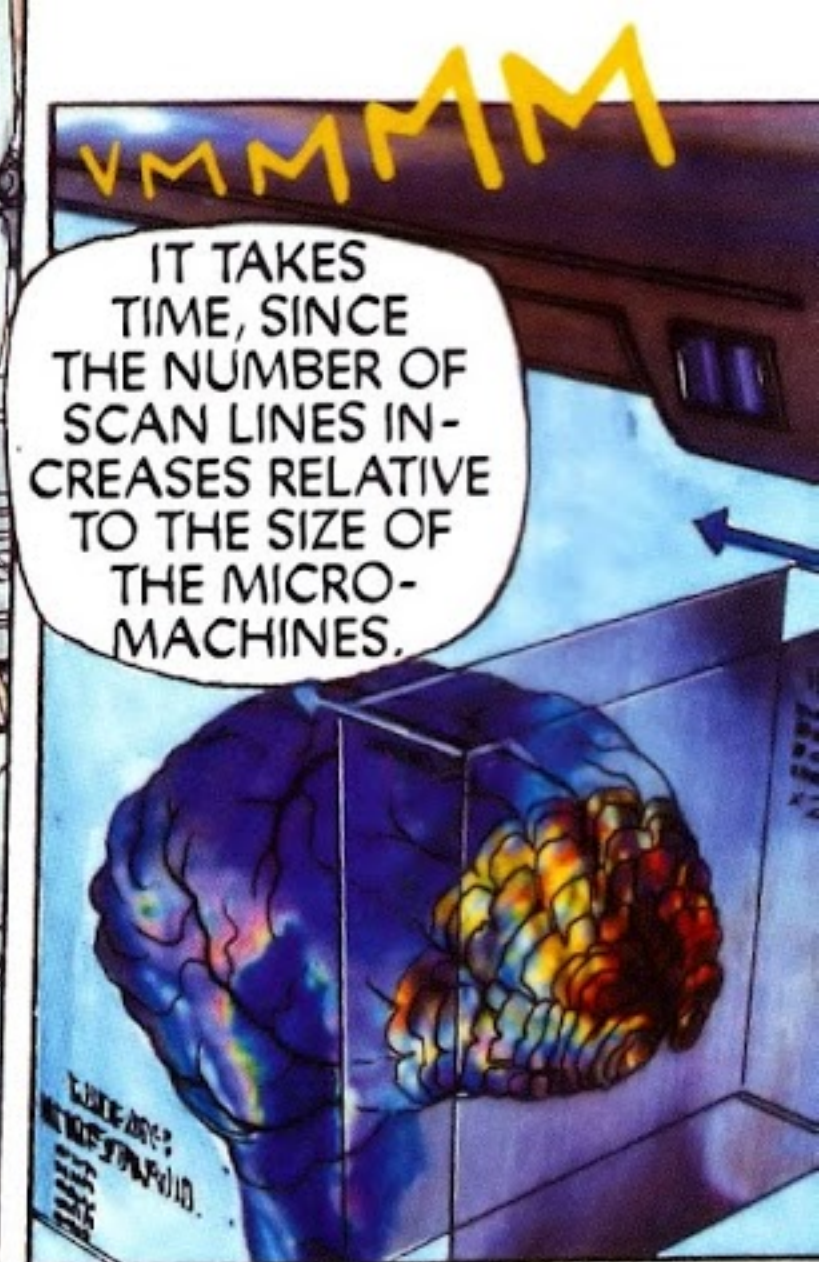


THIS IS NOT A LIGHT FIXTURE BUT A SPECIAL DEVICE THAT ENSURES THE MICROMACHINES ARE DEPOSITED UNIFORMLY.

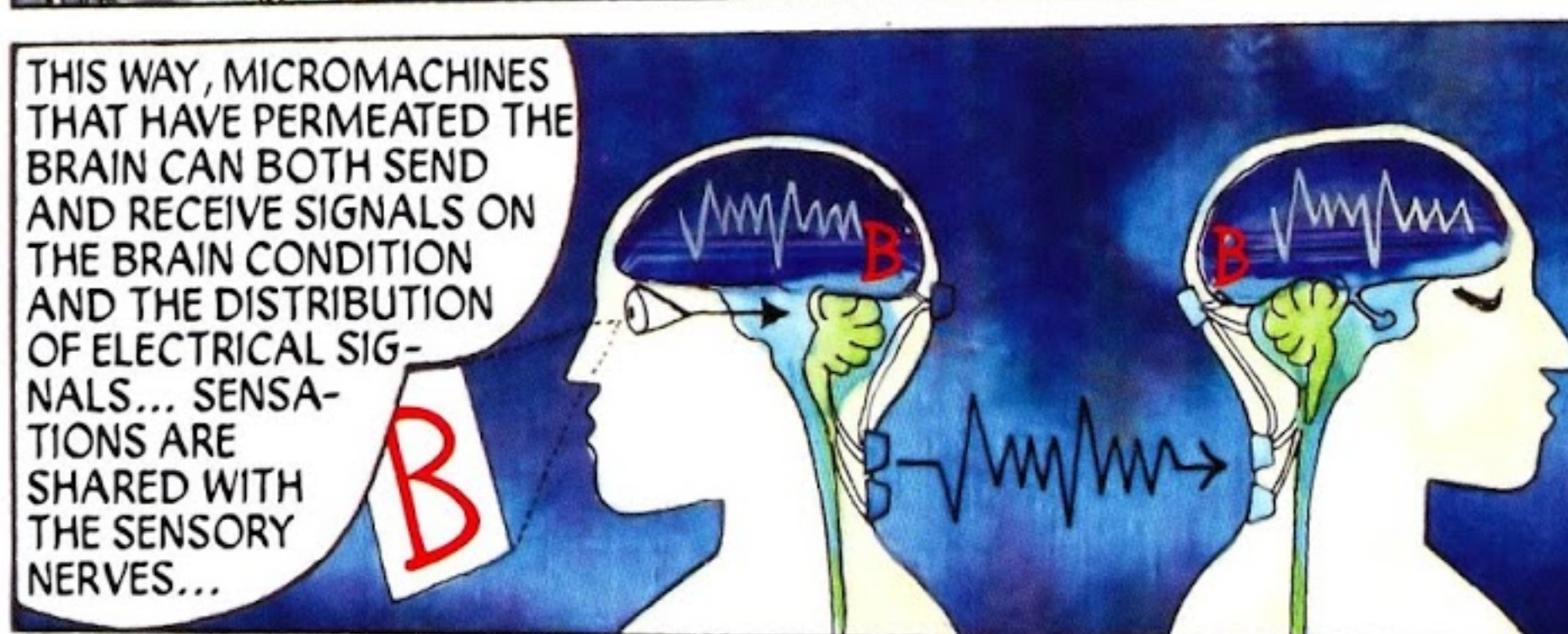




NEXT WE USE A MAGNETIC YOKE TO ADJUST THE MATRIX SETTINGS SO THAT THE MICROMACHINES AT EACH COORDINATE PROPERLY NETWORK WITH THE SERVER GRAFTED TO YOUR OCCIPITAL...

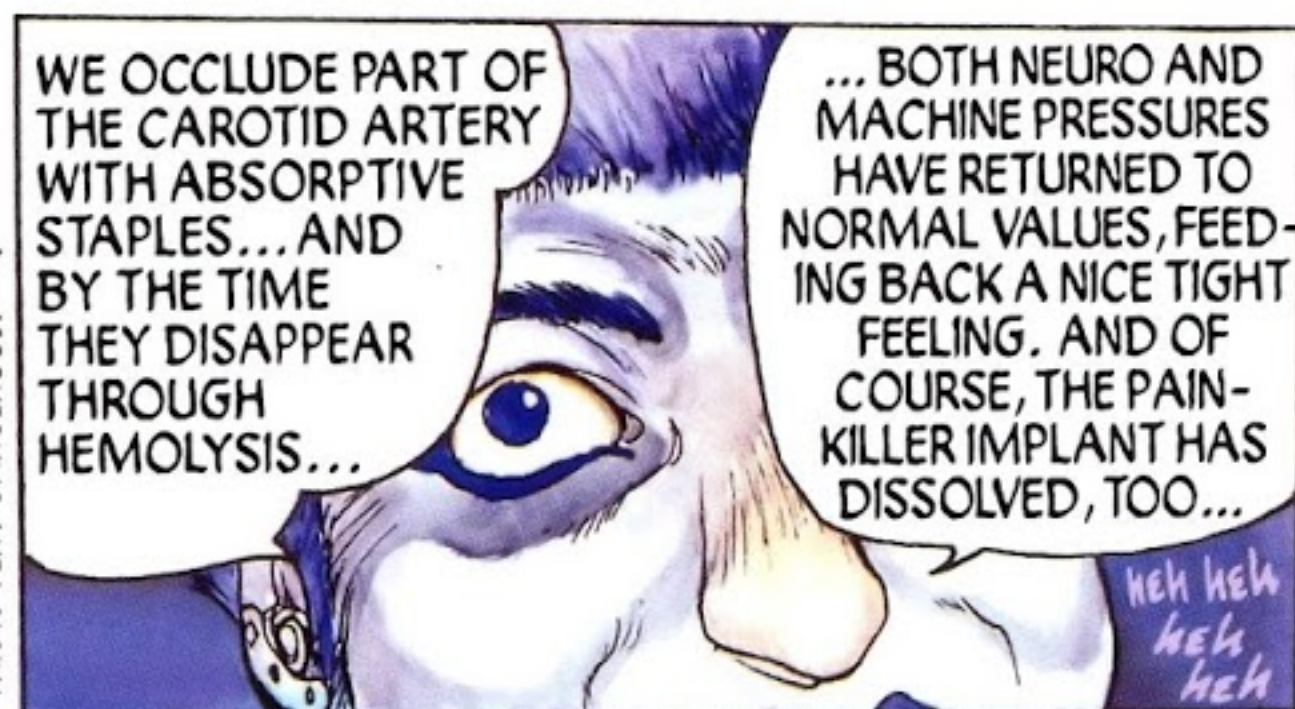


IT TAKES TIME, SINCE THE NUMBER OF SCAN LINES INCREASES RELATIVE TO THE SIZE OF THE MICROMACHINES.



THIS WAY, MICROMACHINES THAT HAVE PERMEATED THE BRAIN CAN BOTH SEND AND RECEIVE SIGNALS ON THE BRAIN CONDITION AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRICAL SIGNALS... SENSATIONS ARE SHARED WITH THE SENSORY NERVES...

...THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES ARE SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT TO TRANSMIT DUE TO INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS IN SIGNAL DISTRIBUTION AND SPECIFIC IMAGING. AS A RESULT, THE SYSTEM IS SET TO USE BOTH LANGUAGE AND VISUAL PERCEPTION LINGUISTIC FIELDS ARE USED FOR THE ON/OFF FUNCTION IN BOTH CYBERBRAINS.



WE OCCLUDE PART OF THE CAROTID ARTERY WITH ABSORPTIVE STAPLES... AND BY THE TIME THEY DISAPPEAR THROUGH HEMOLYSIS...

... BOTH NEURO AND MACHINE PRESSURES HAVE RETURNED TO NORMAL VALUES, FEEDING BACK A NICE TIGHT FEELING. AND OF COURSE, THE PAIN-KILLER IMPLANT HAS DISSOLVED, TOO...

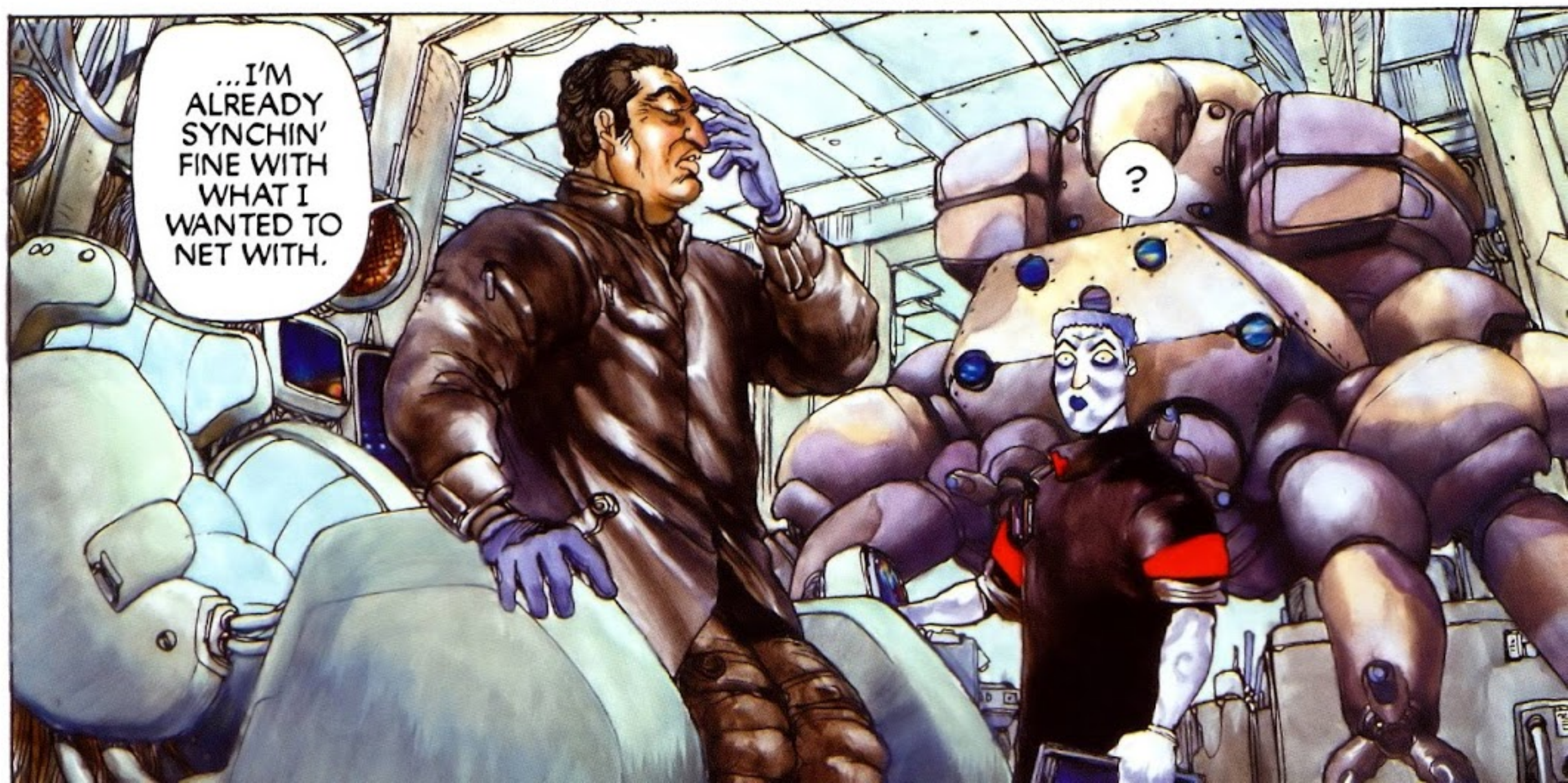
heh heh  
heh heh  
heh



THEN, AT THE END, WE RUN A COMPARE TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE SYNCHED WITH THE IMAGE OF THE ORIGINAL MODEL. THIS ST--

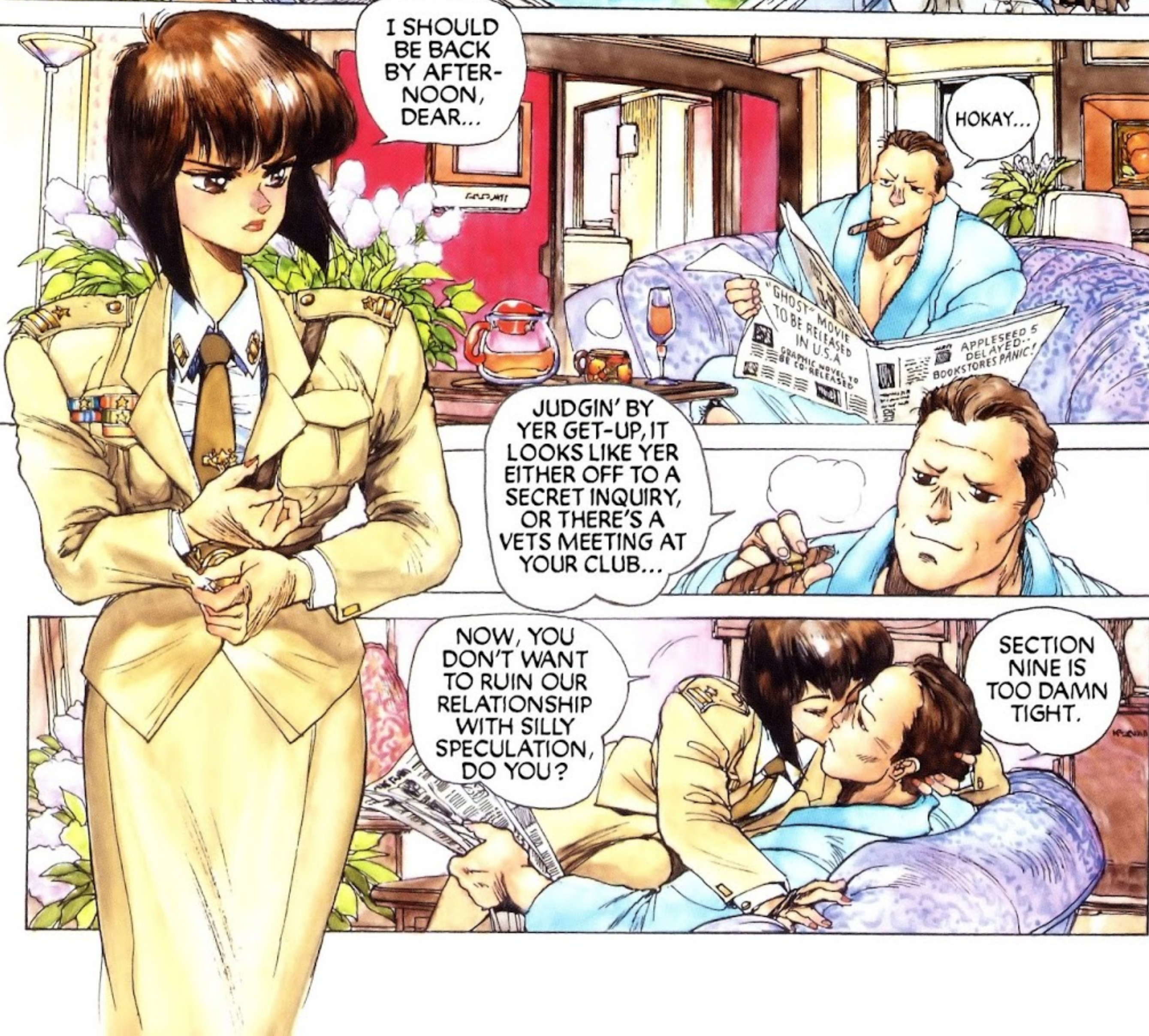
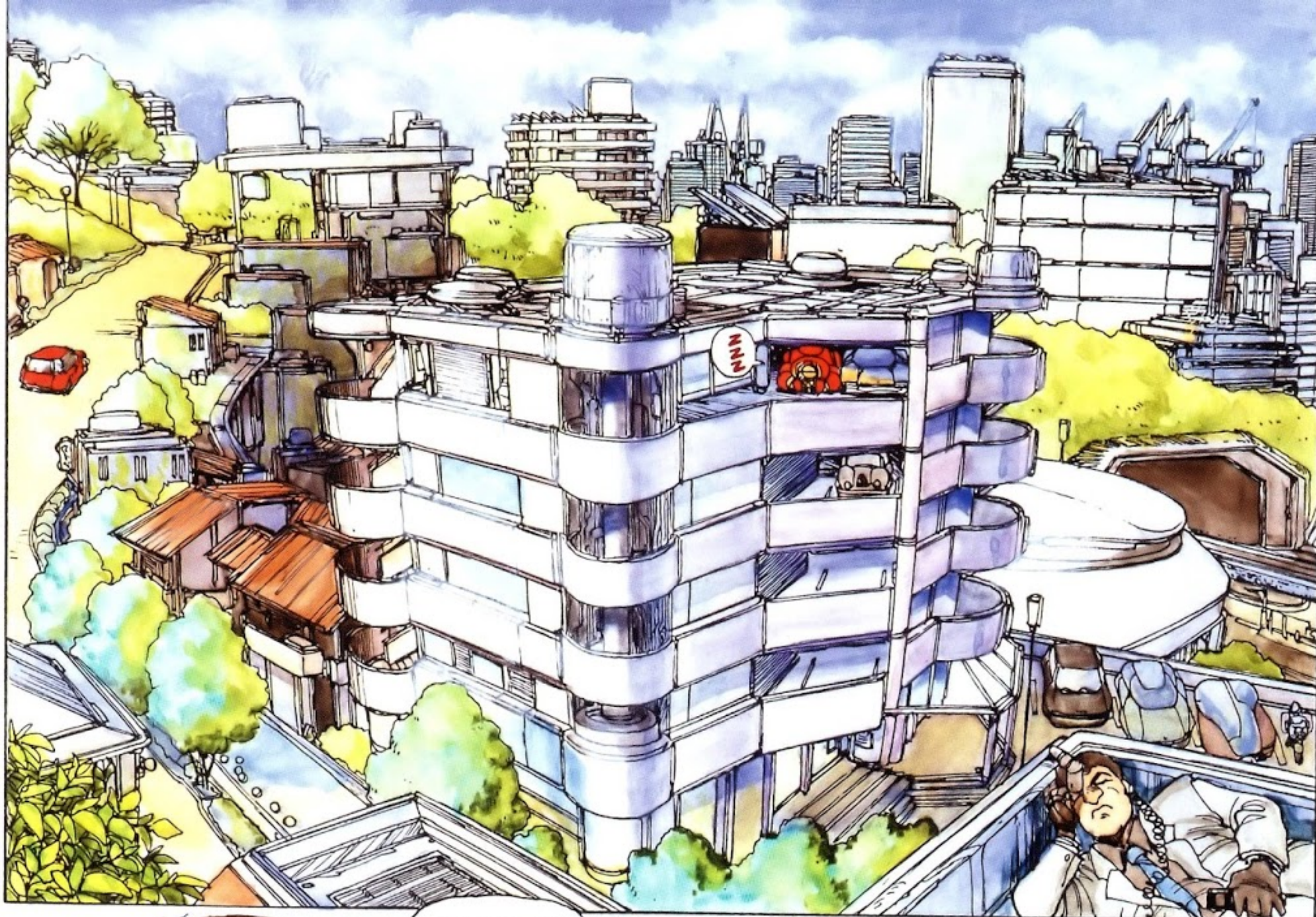
FILE IT, DOC...

SINCE BRAIN WAVES CAN BE USED LIKE FINGERPRINTS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN PEOPLE, THEY'RE AMPLIFIED AND USED AS A "KEY."



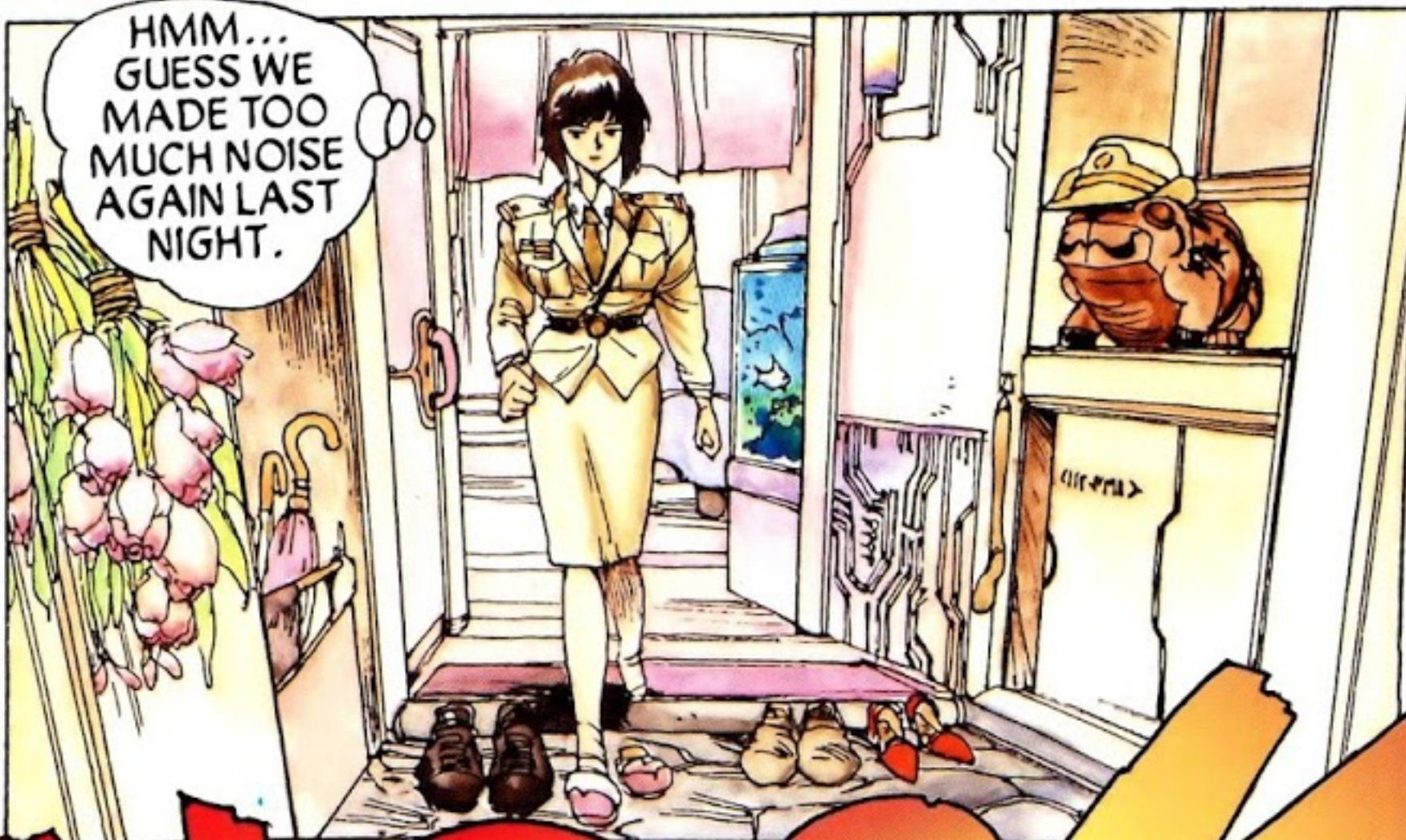
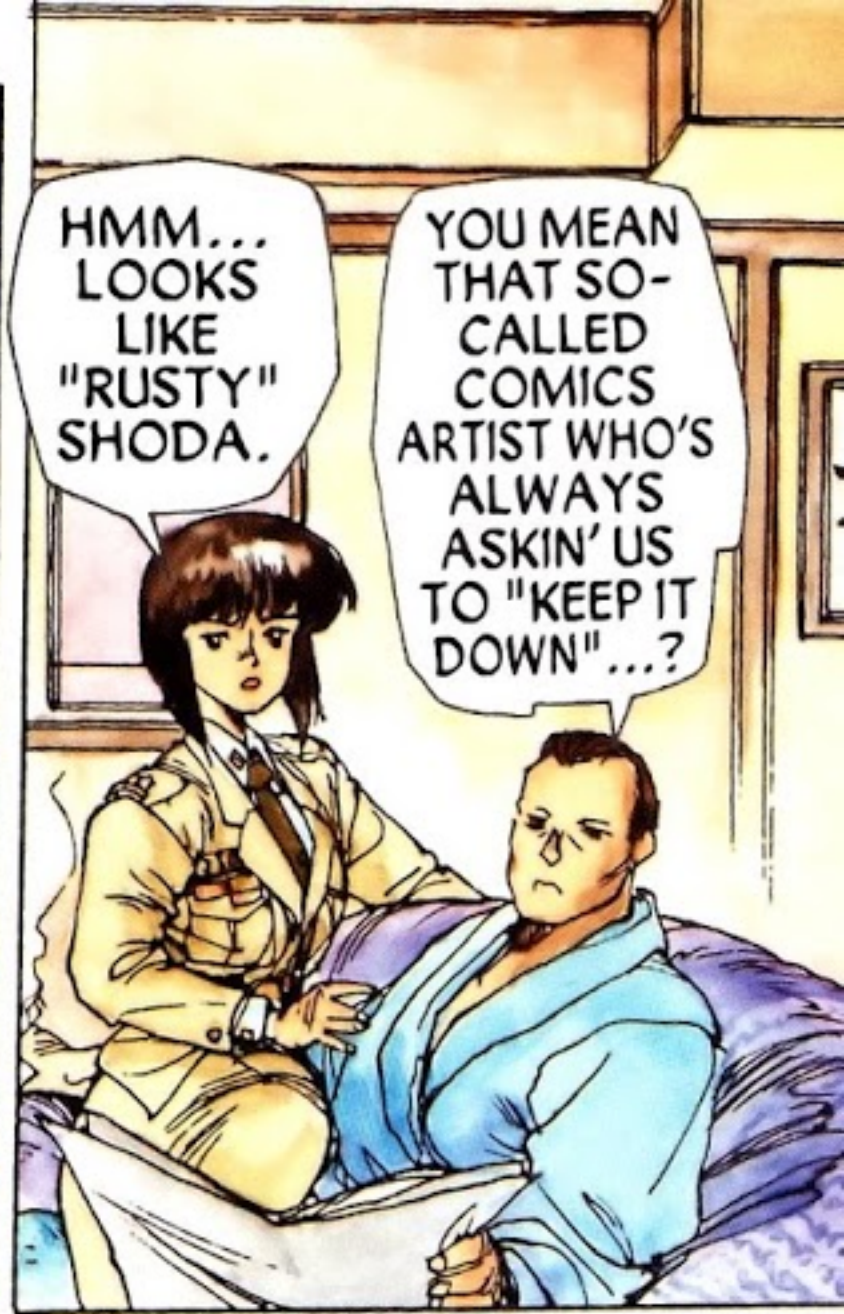
...I'M ALREADY SYNCHIN' FINE WITH WHAT I WANTED TO NET WITH.







"LOOSE" IN THE SENSE OF LEAKS...







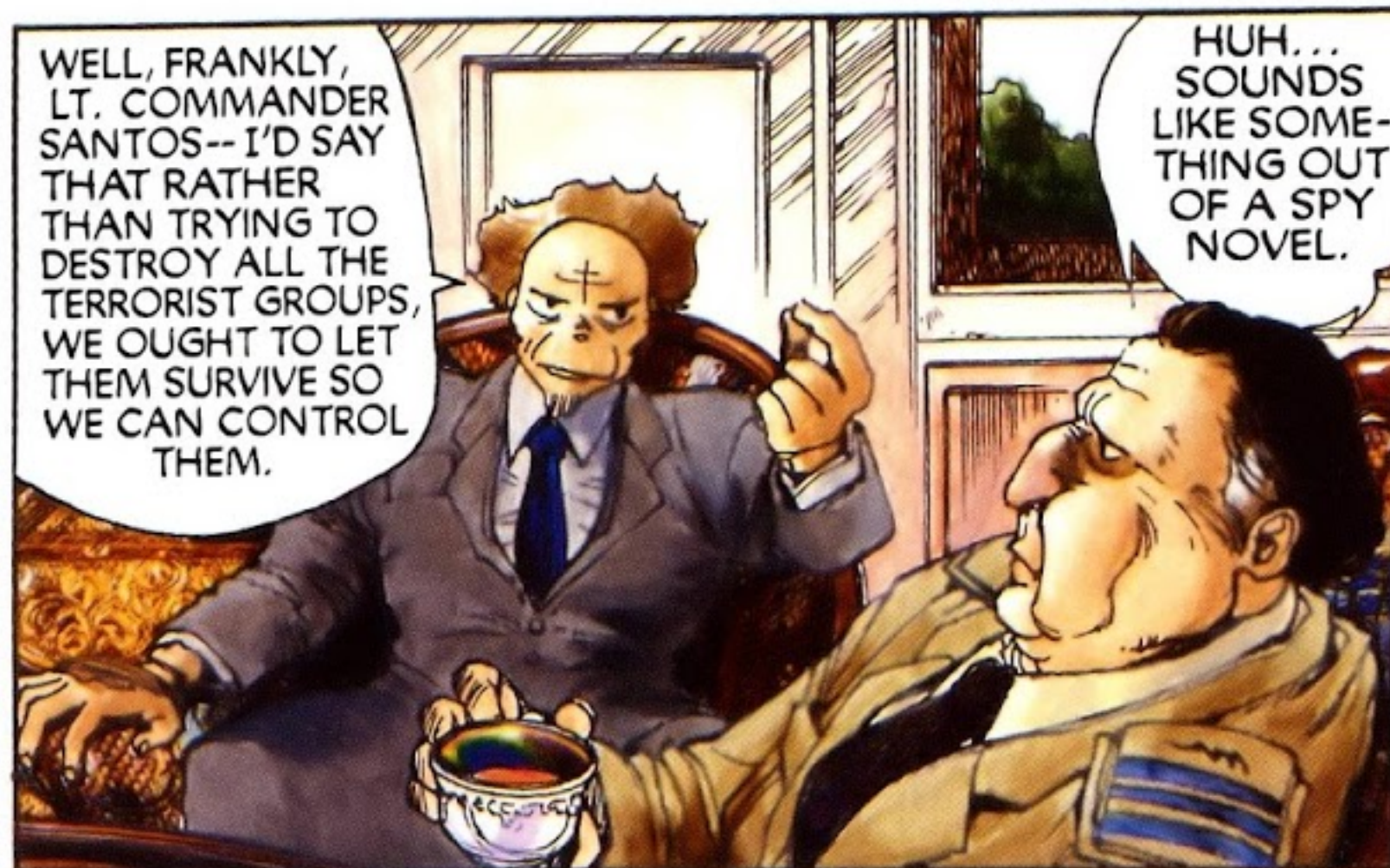




NO MATTER HOW MANY TERRORISTS WE RETIRE, NEW ONES KEEP POPPING UP...



ANY WAY TO GET A HANDLE ON THIS PROBLEM?



WELL, FRANKLY, LT. COMMANDER SANTOS-- I'D SAY THAT RATHER THAN TRYING TO DESTROY ALL THE TERRORIST GROUPS, WE OUGHT TO LET THEM SURVIVE SO WE CAN CONTROL THEM.

HUH... SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A SPY NOVEL.



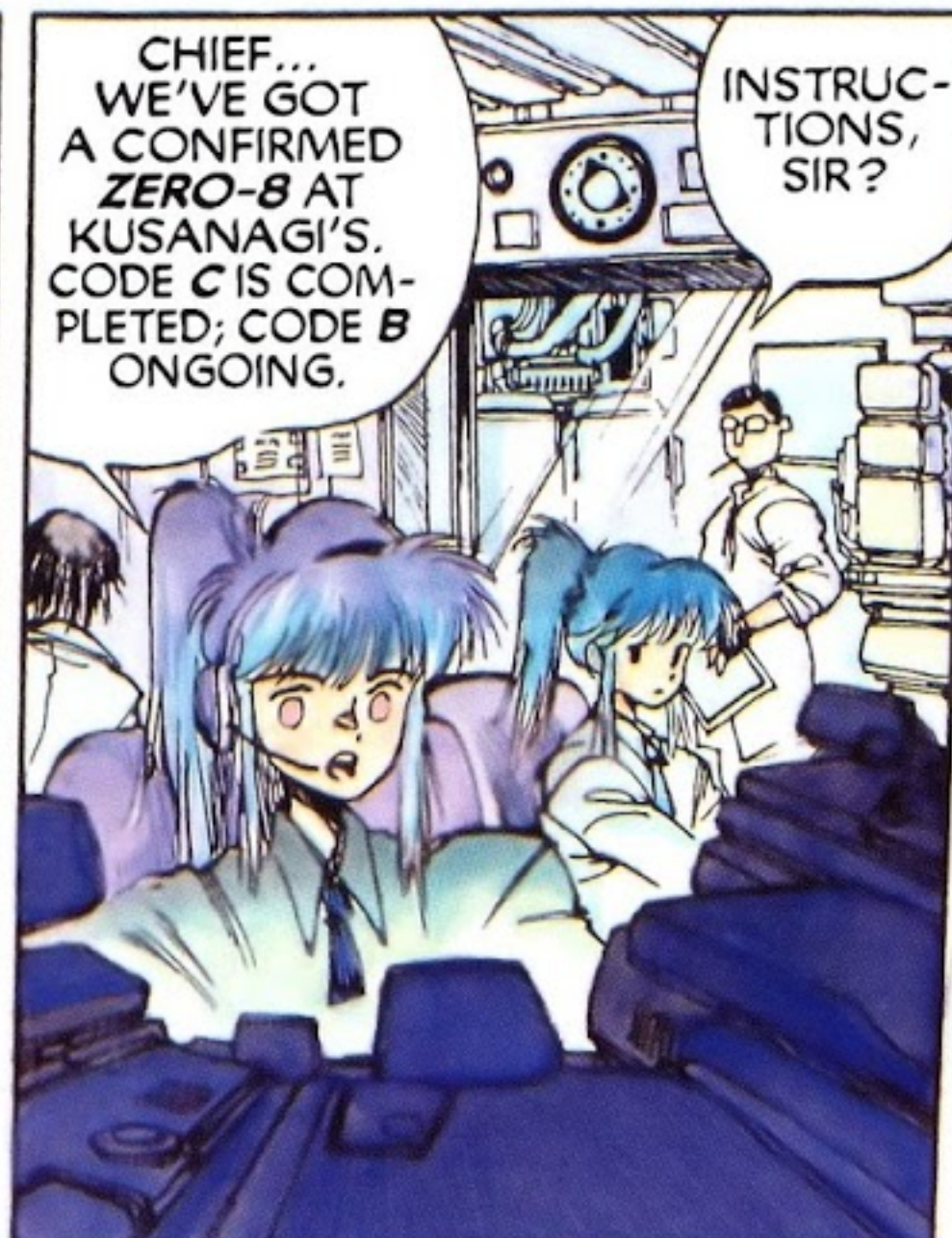
YOU'D BE PARTIALLY RECOGNIZING THEIR POWER.

THERE ARE TIGHT LINKS BETWEEN THE MILITARY, DRUG DEALERS, TERRORISTS, THE UNDERWORLD, AND CORRUPT POLICE IN MY COUNTRY... AND A LOT OF PEOPLE GET OUT OF CONTROL.



IT'S RESULTS WE'RE INTERESTED IN, NOT IDEALS.

'SCUSE ME...



CHIEF... WE'VE GOT A CONFIRMED **ZERO-B** AT KUSANAGI'S. CODE **C** IS COMPLETED; CODE **B** ONGOING.

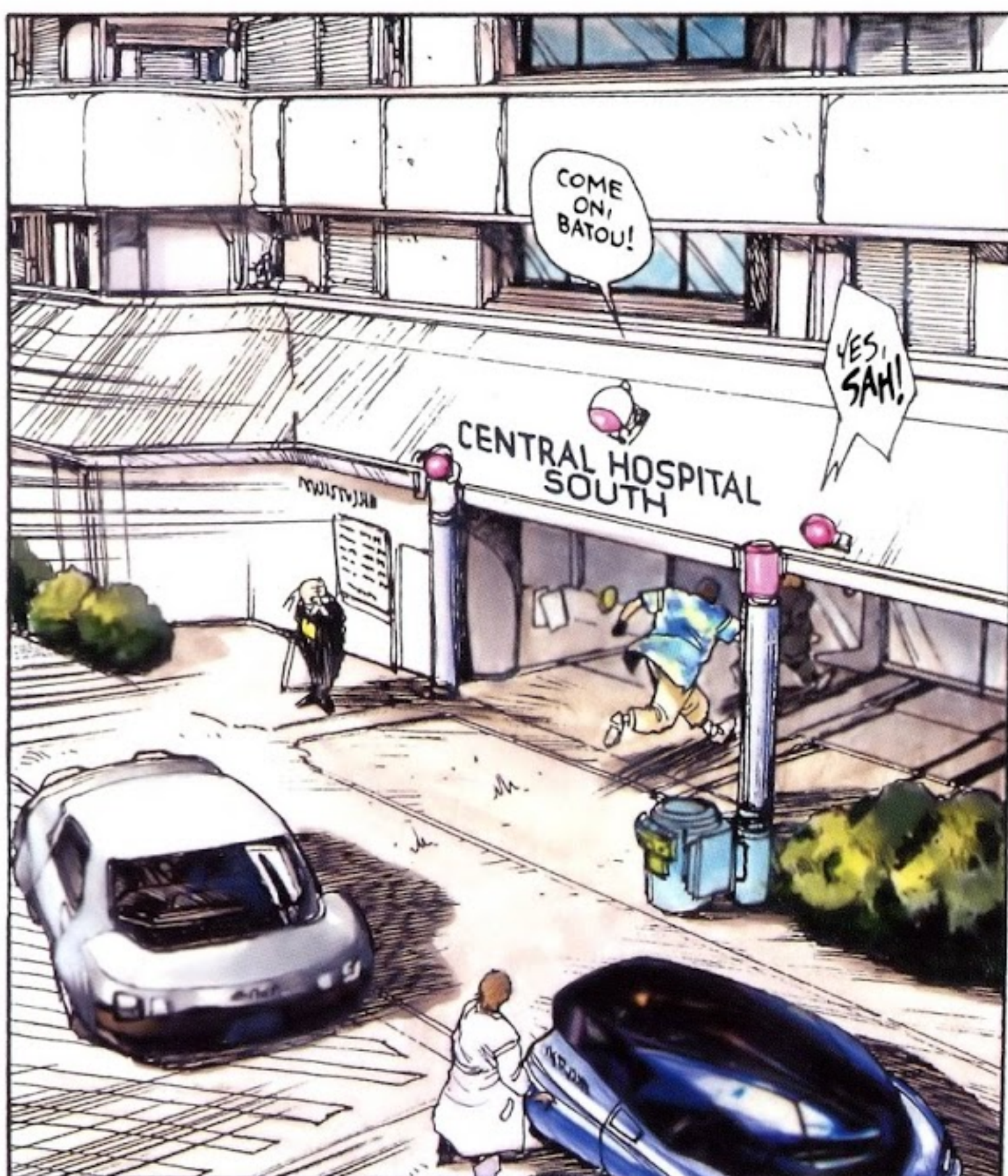
INSTRUCTIONS, SIR?



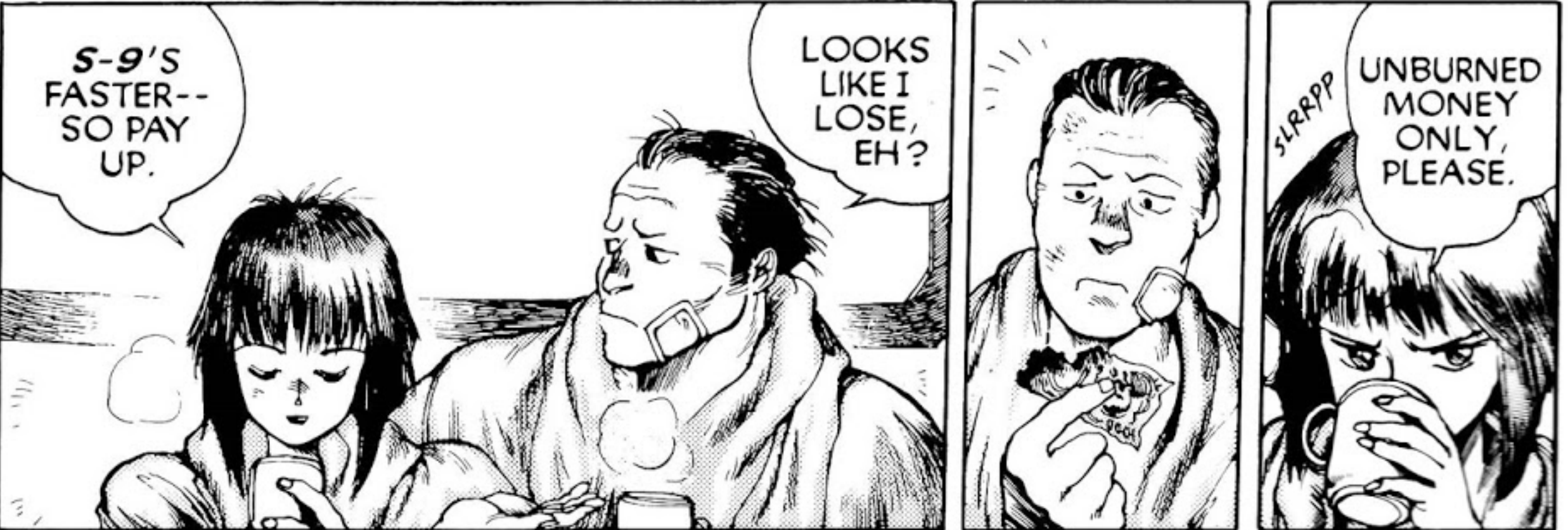
I WANT ALL AIR-FIELDS AND PORTS WITHIN A 50-MILE RADIUS SEALED OFF! CALL THE AGENCY--

--AND TELL ALL PERSONNEL TO STAND BY ON RED! BATOU AND I'LL HEAD TO THE HOSPITAL.













CHIEF!  
I'VE GOT  
THE INITIAL  
VIDEO FEED  
FOR YOU!

HOLD  
IT FOR 30  
SECONDS!



I'LL CALL  
YOU LATER,  
DEAR.



AW,  
SORRY  
'BOUT  
THIS,  
PAL...

BATOU!  
KNOCK  
IT OFF!



GOLLY GEE,  
MAJOR! YOU'VE  
BEEN DATING  
THAT GUY FOR  
NEARLY SEVEN  
MONTHS...

GOTTA  
BE A  
NEW  
RECORD!



HERE'S THE  
SCOOP, CHIEF!  
ONE 10-GAUGE SHOT-  
GUN SHELL FOUND  
OUTSIDE THE DOOR,  
AND TEN SEBURO™  
M5 SHELL CASINGS  
INSIDE...

SO THE  
MAJOR  
MUST'VE  
FIRED LIKE  
THIS, HERE,  
SEE?



AND ON THE  
OTHER SIDE  
OF THE DOOR  
THERE'RE BODY  
FRAGMENTS,  
SCREWS, AND  
NAILS... THE  
SNIFFER SAYS  
IT WAS C4.

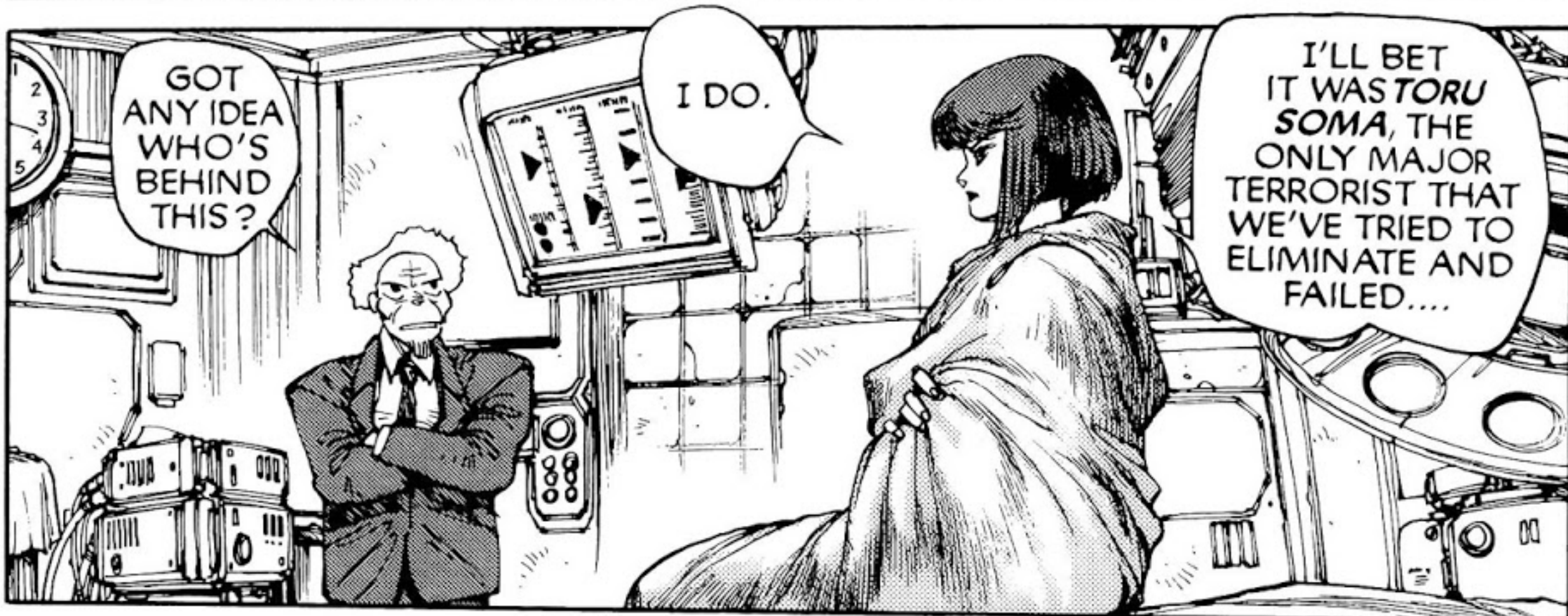
THE MAJOR'S  
OKAY, RIGHT?  
LOOKS LIKE THIS  
BLAST WAS  
JUST INTENDED  
AS A WARNING,  
SO I FIGURE SHE  
HAD TIME TO  
TAKE COVER...





ISHIKAWA! I WANT YOU TO TAKE A DIFFERENT CAR HOME, AND WATCH OUT FOR SNIPERS AND PEOPLE TRYING TO TAIL YOU!

YOU THINK IT WAS THE SAME PERSON I THINK IT WAS, MAJOR?



GOT ANY IDEA WHO'S BEHIND THIS?

I DO.

I'LL BET IT WAS **TORU SOMA**, THE ONLY MAJOR TERRORIST THAT WE'VE TRIED TO ELIMINATE AND FAILED....

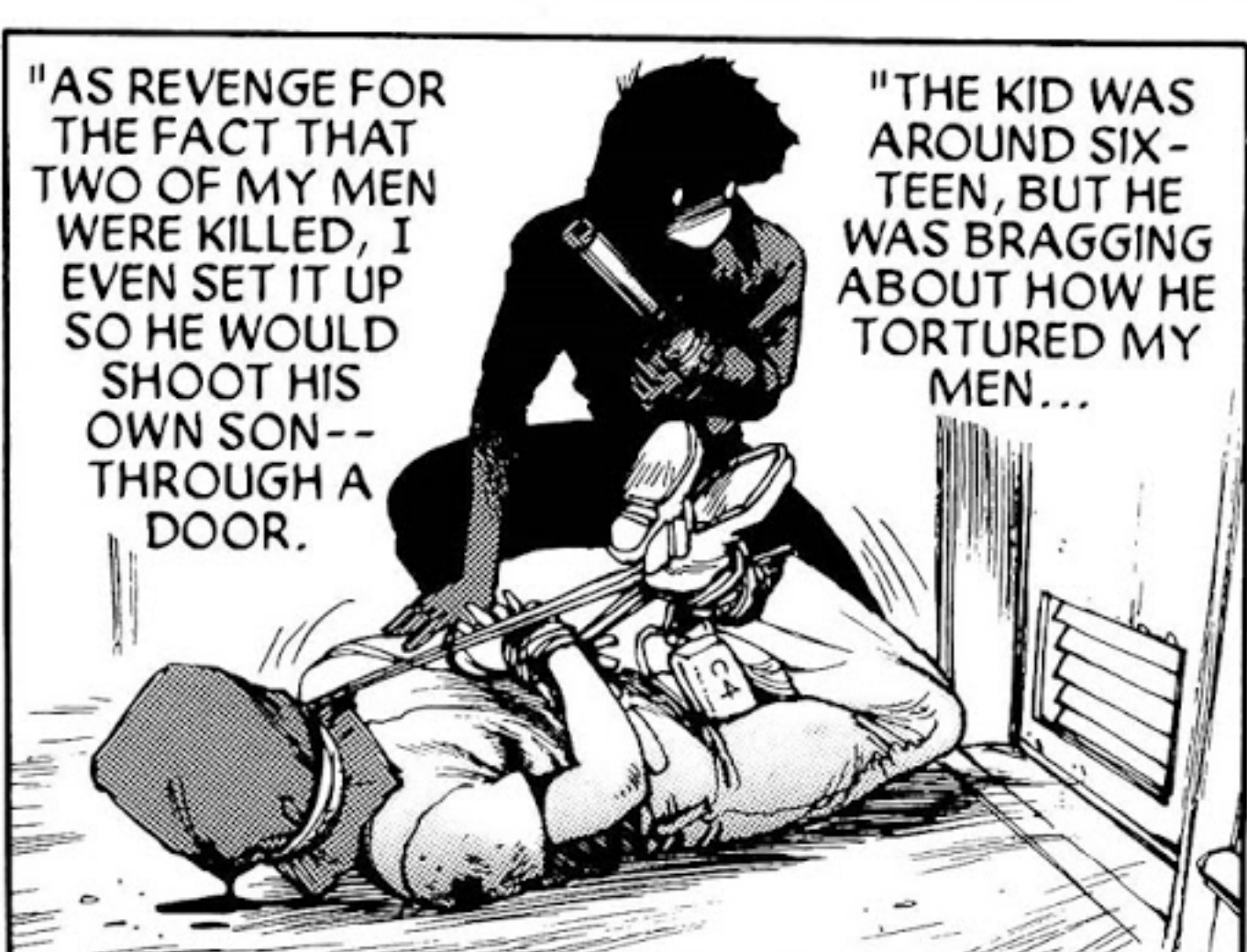


WHAT MAKES YOU THINK IT WAS HIM?



WE RETIRED SIX OF HIS PALS WITH THE SAME METHOD...

SOMA WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED, TOO.



"AS REVENGE FOR THE FACT THAT TWO OF MY MEN WERE KILLED, I EVEN SET IT UP SO HE WOULD SHOOT HIS OWN SON-- THROUGH A DOOR.

"THE KID WAS AROUND SIX-TEEN, BUT HE WAS BRAGGING ABOUT HOW HE TORTURED MY MEN...

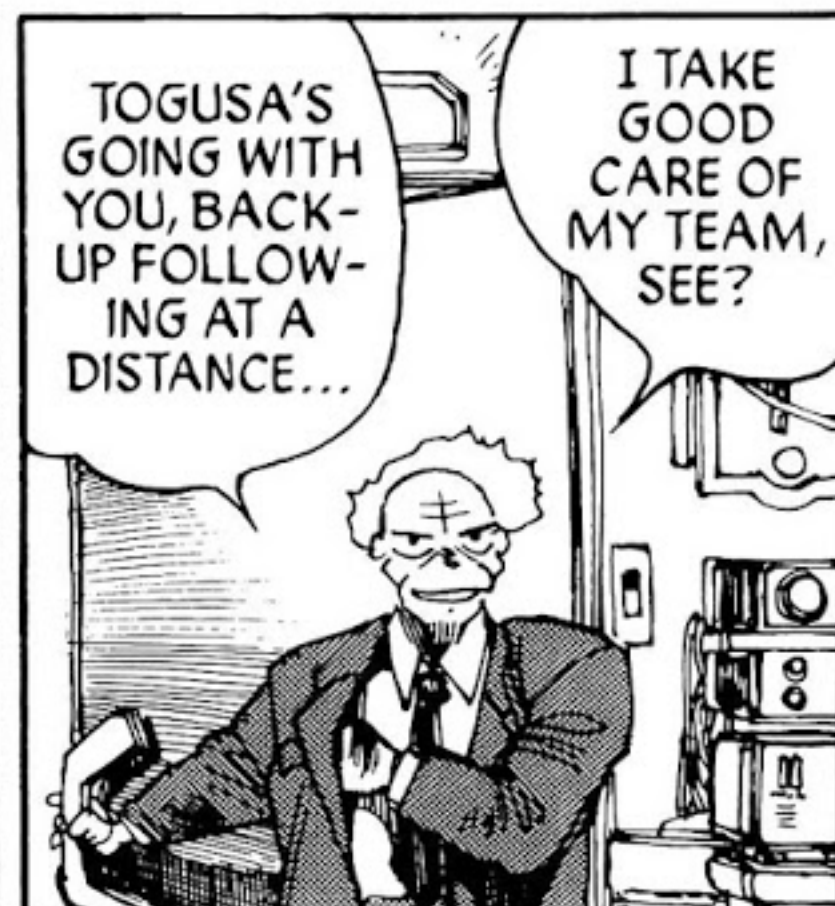


"AFTER THE EXPLOSION, WE STORMED THE ROOM TO MAKE SURE SOMA WAS DEAD...

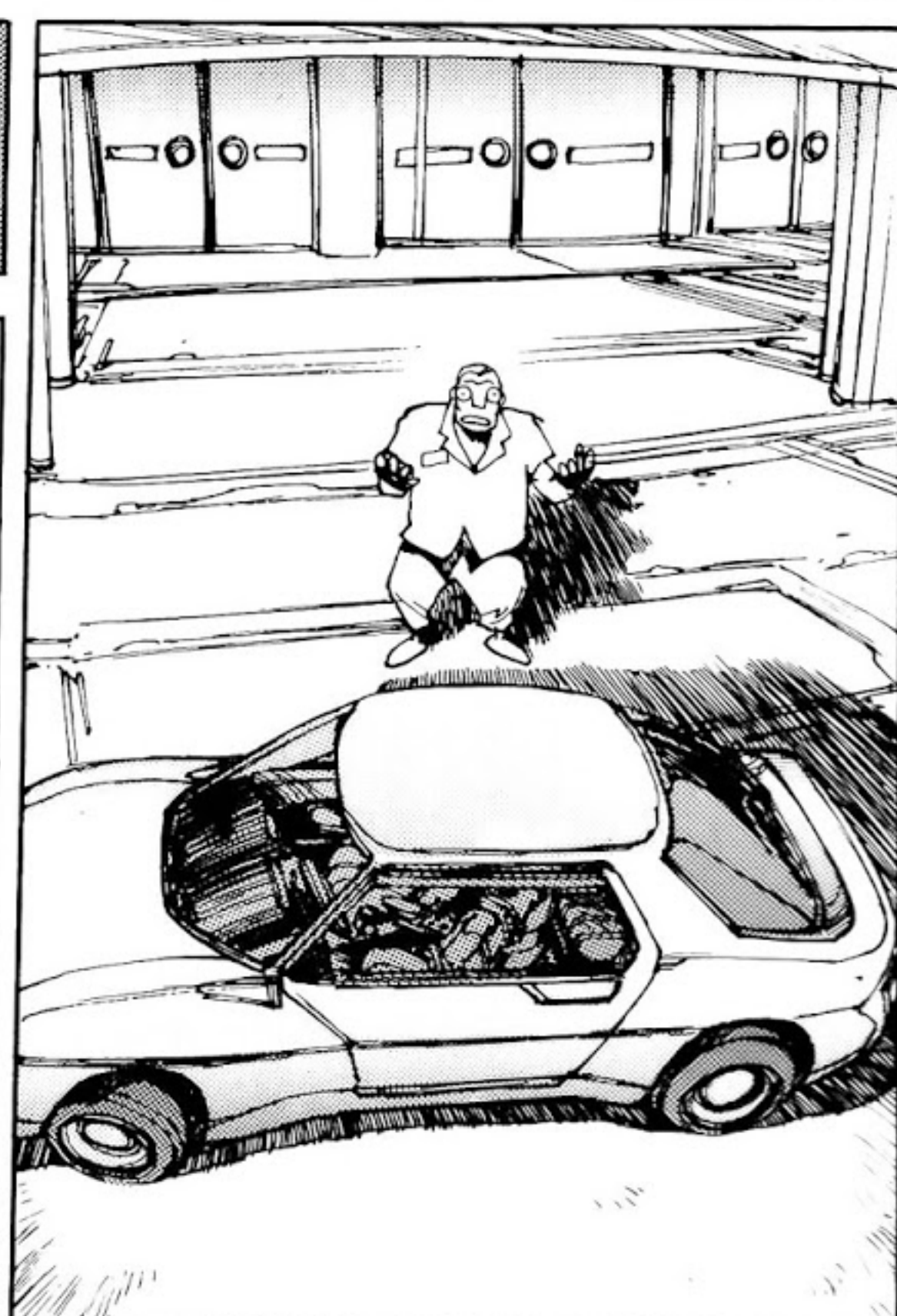
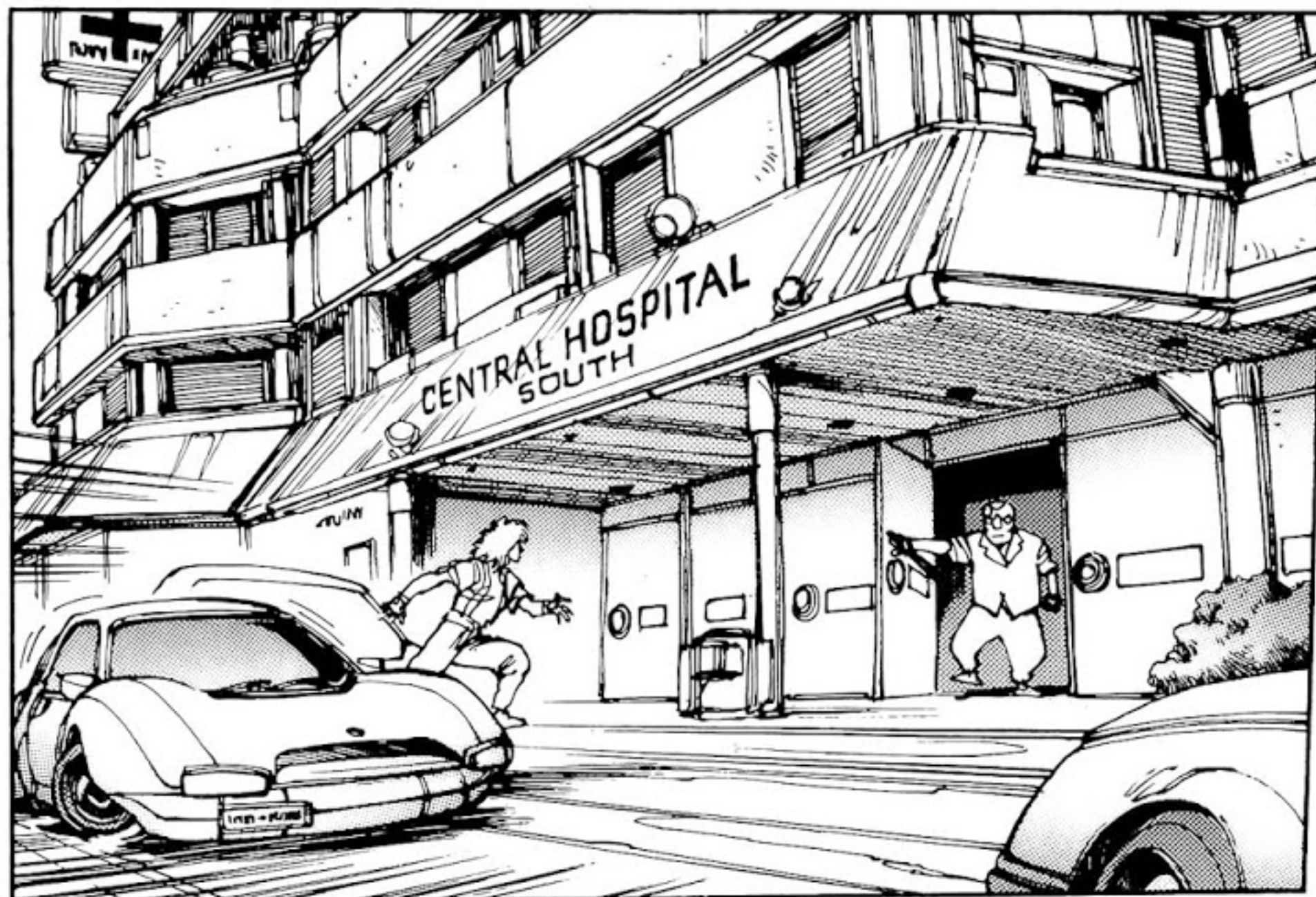
"... BUT THE ONLY THING WE FOUND WAS PRESSURE TRACKS LEFT BY AN ARMORED SUIT.

"THAT WAS FOUR YEARS AGO."

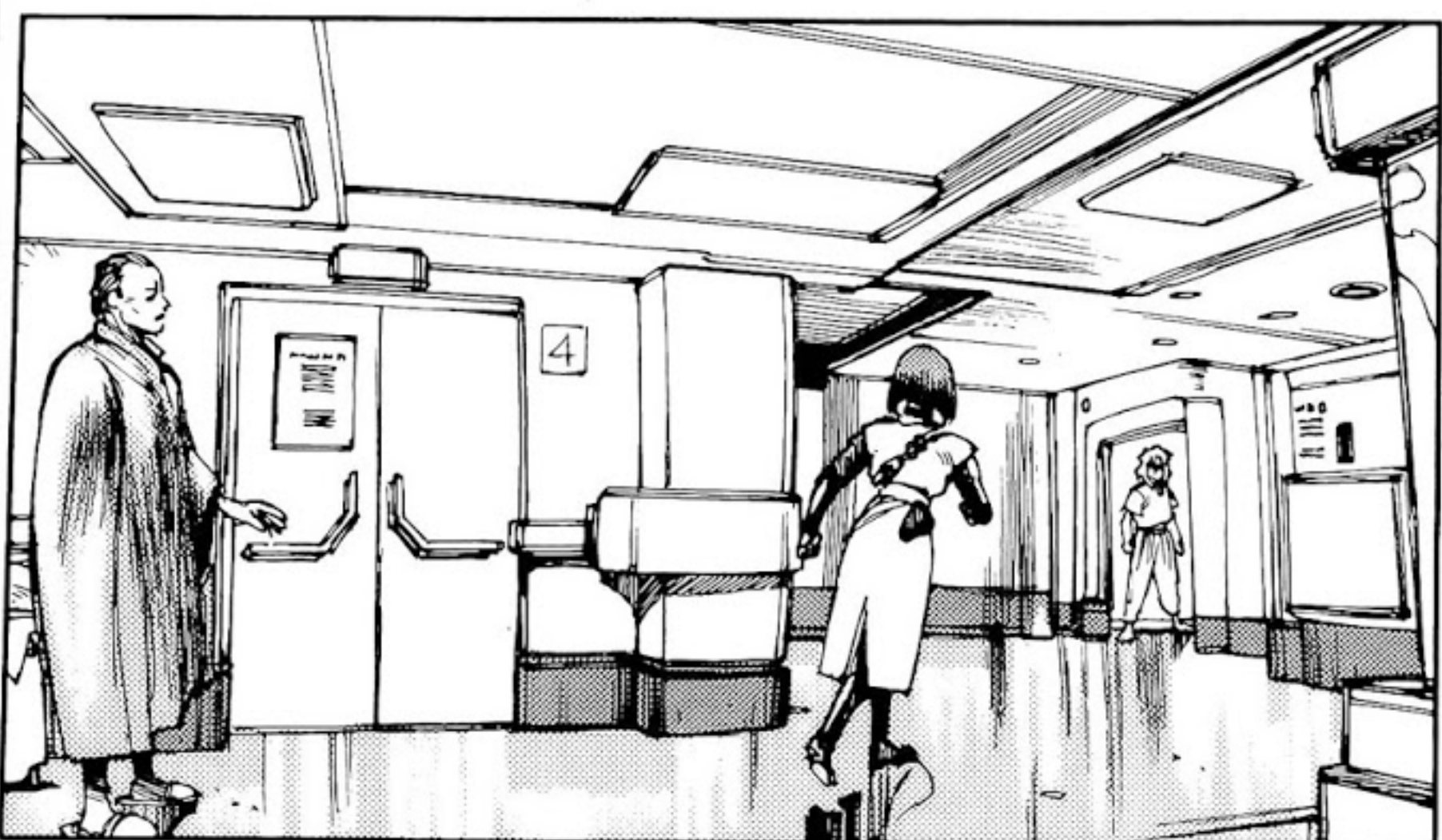




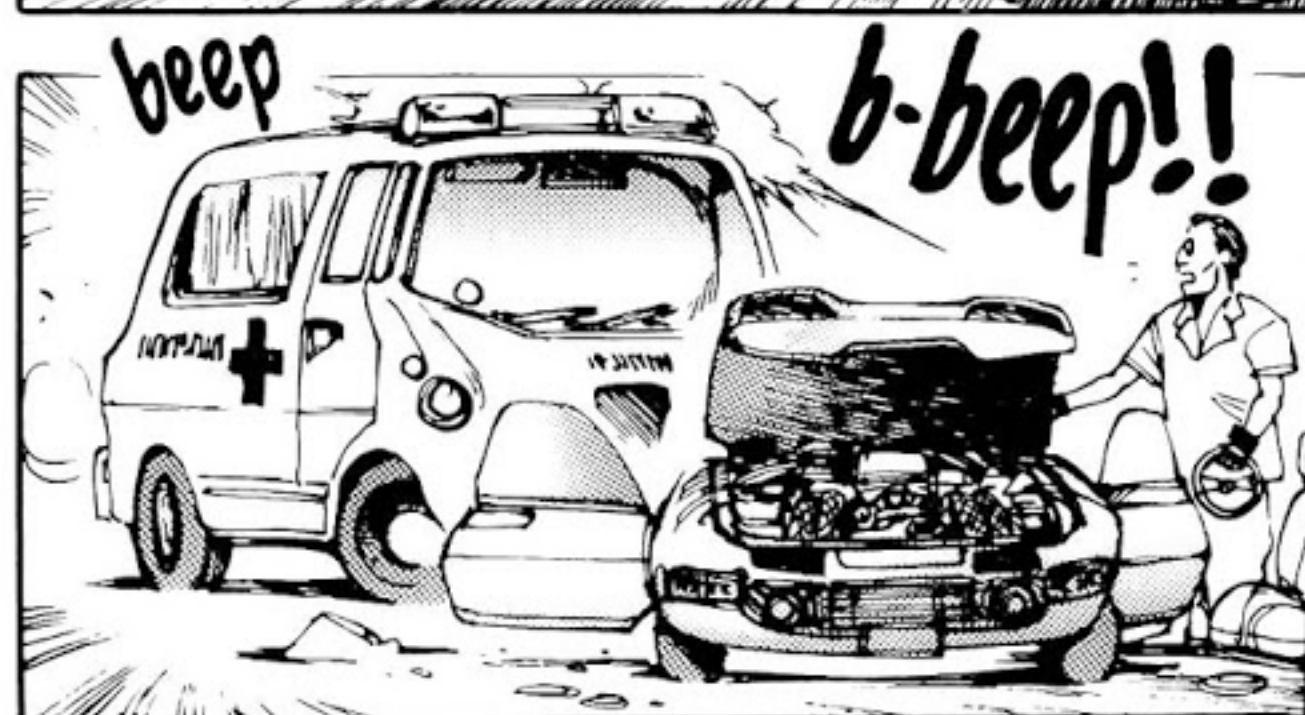




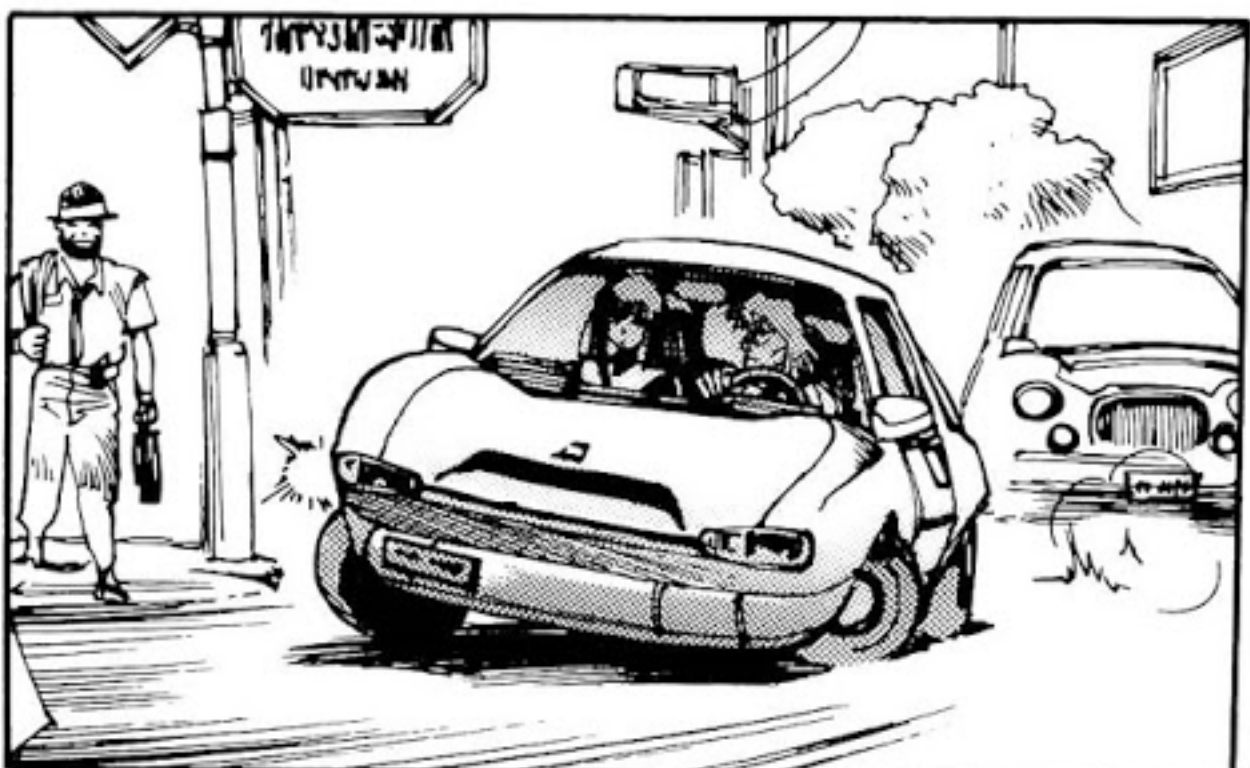
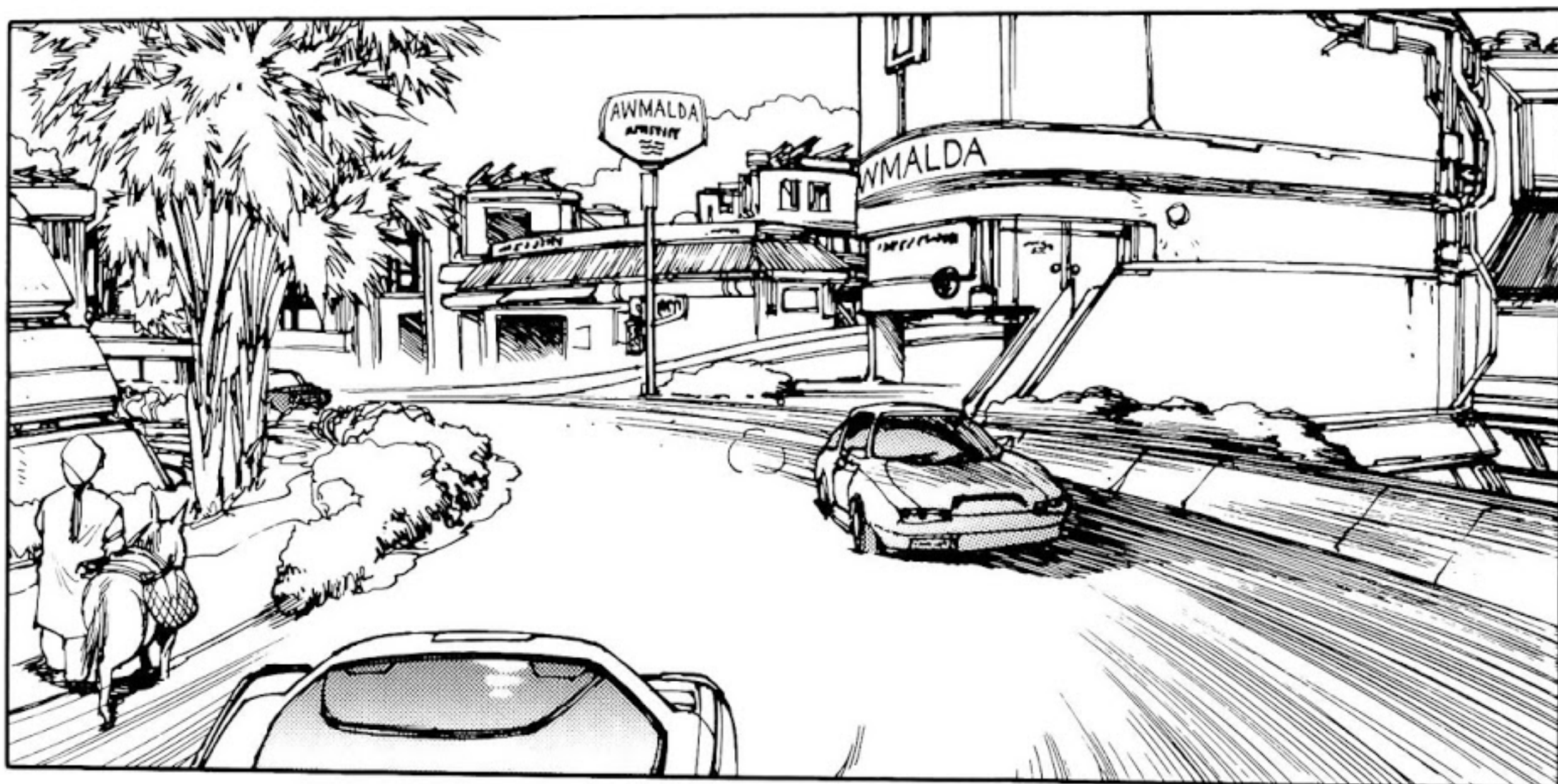
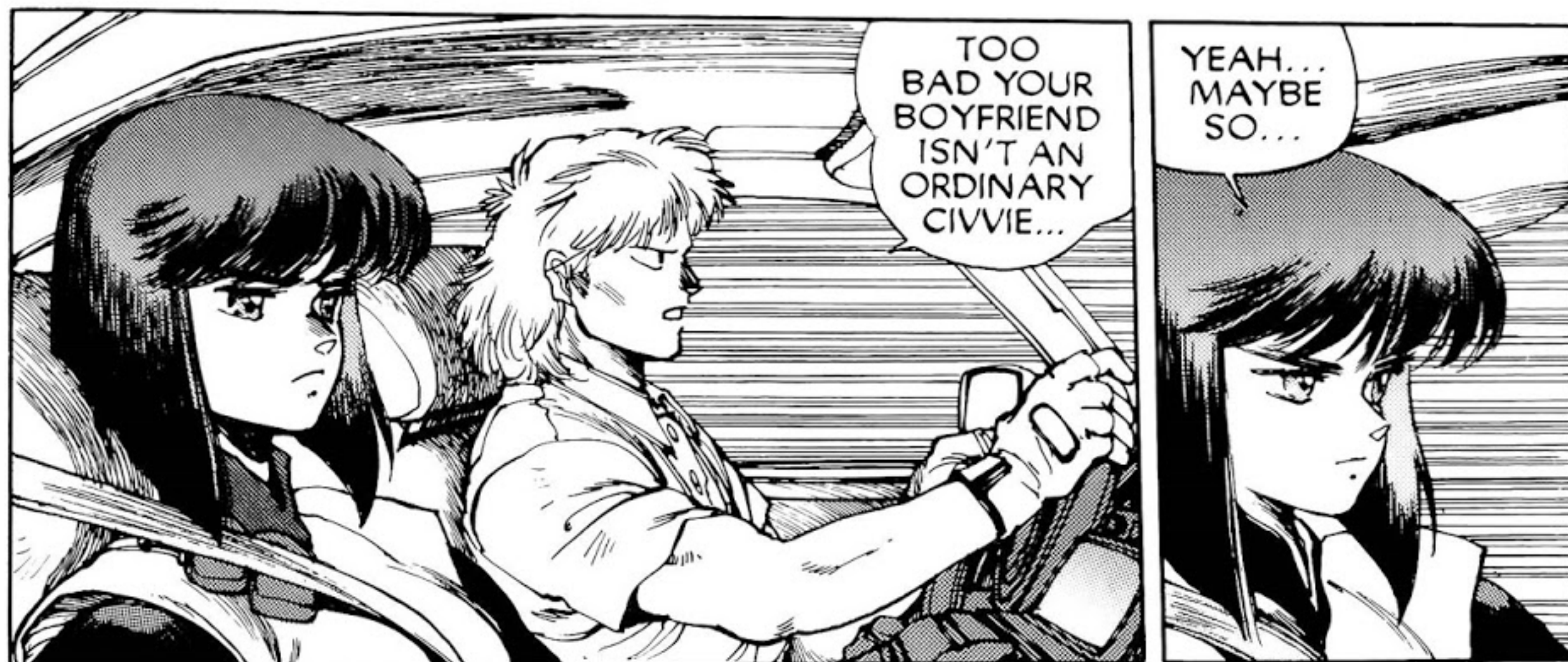




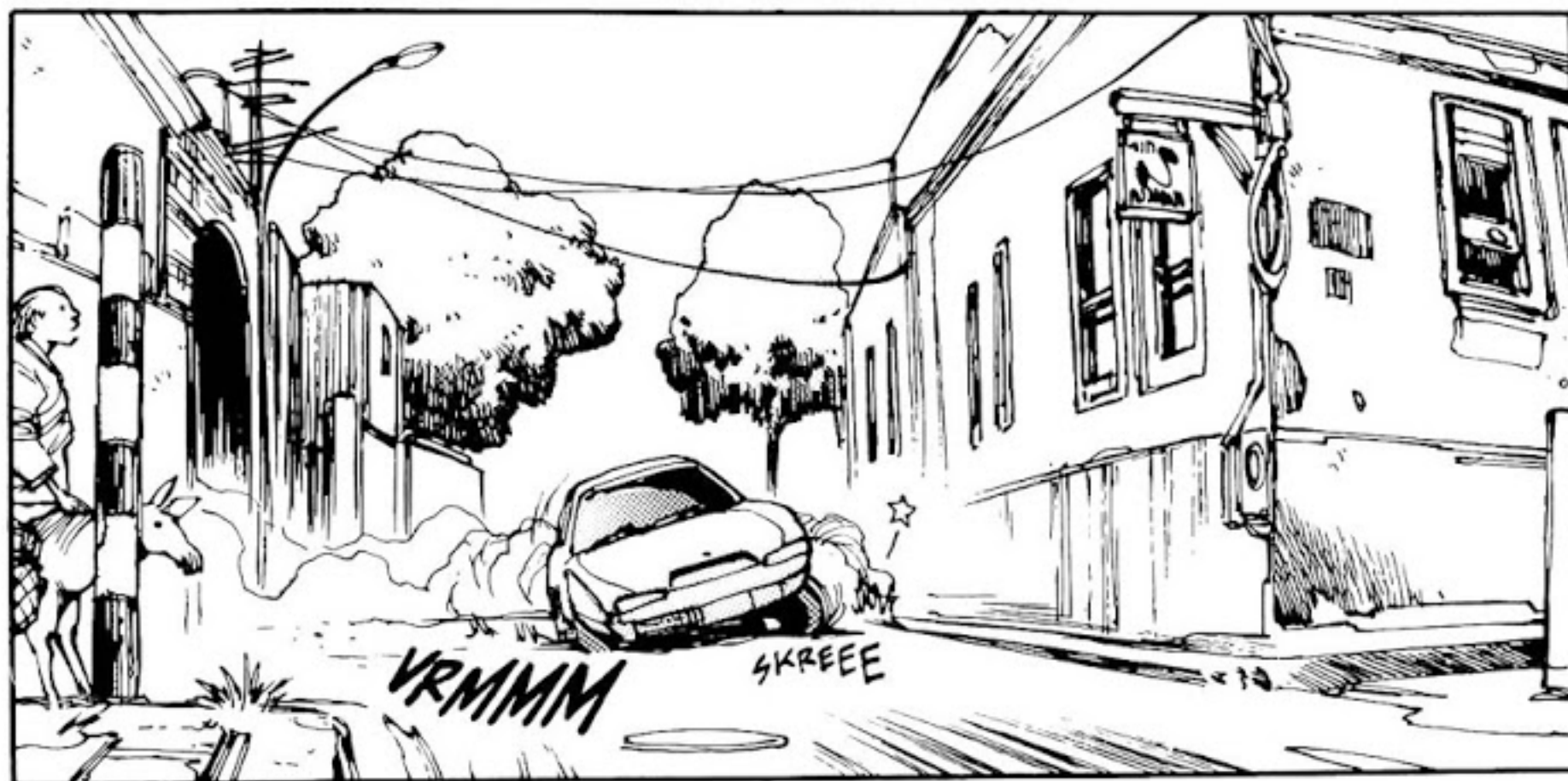












THERE'S  
A CAR  
ON OUR  
TAIL AL-  
READY.

HE'S  
NOTICED  
AND IS  
TRYING TO  
SET US UP.

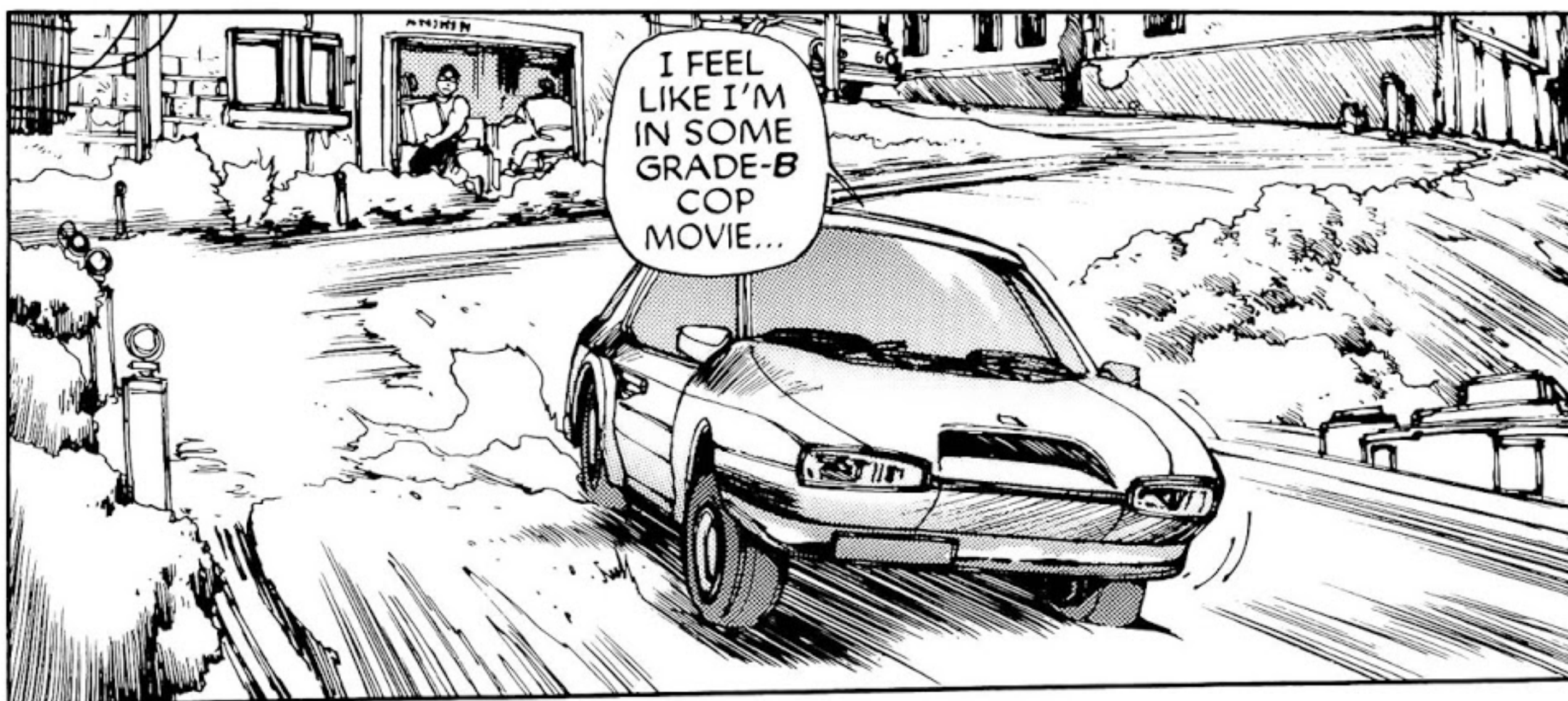


WHERE'S  
THE  
NEAREST  
CLEAR  
STREET... ?

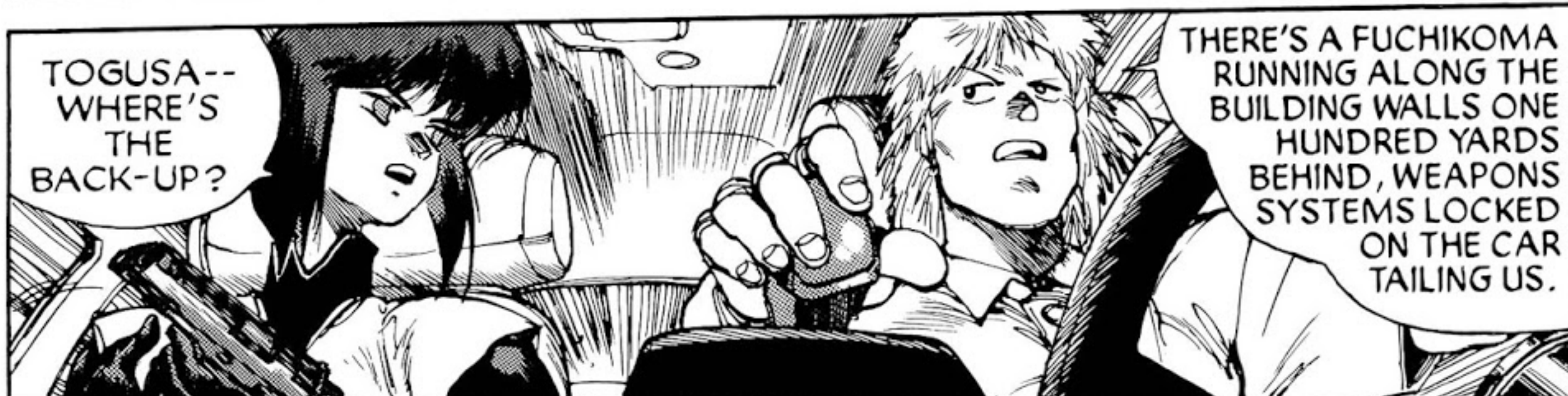


LEFT AT  
THE NEXT  
CORNER,  
THEN LEFT  
LANE...

... HEAD  
SOUTH FOR  
7.5 MILES  
TO A  
DESERTED  
FACTORY...



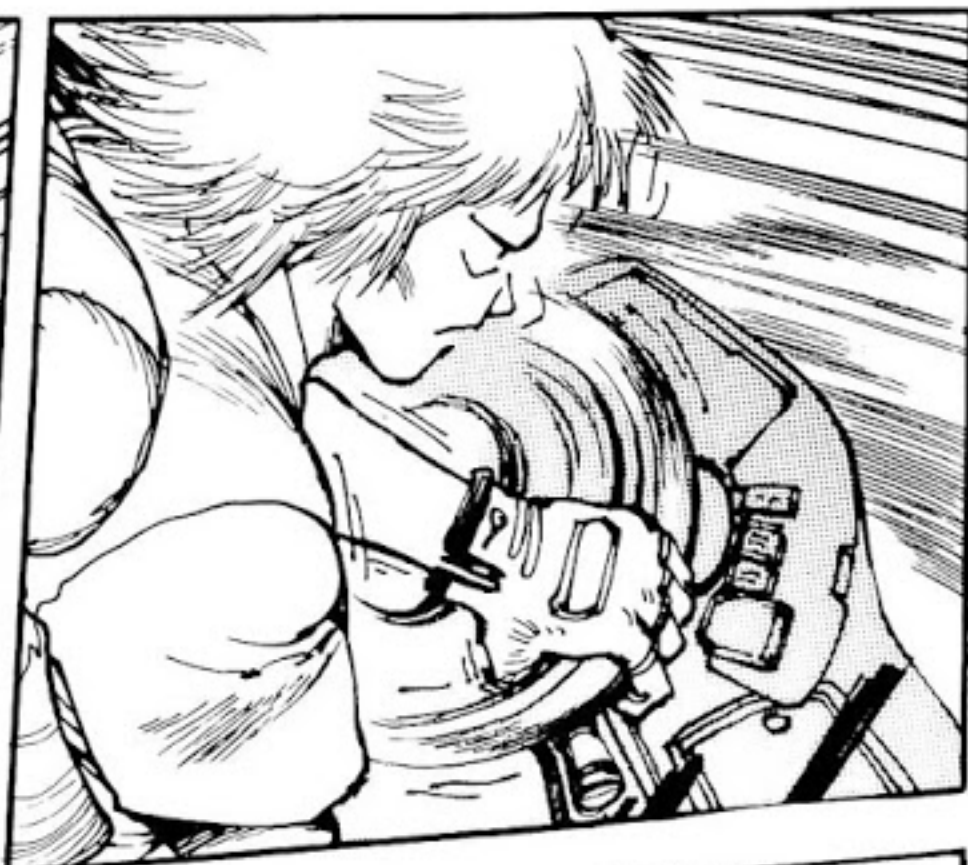
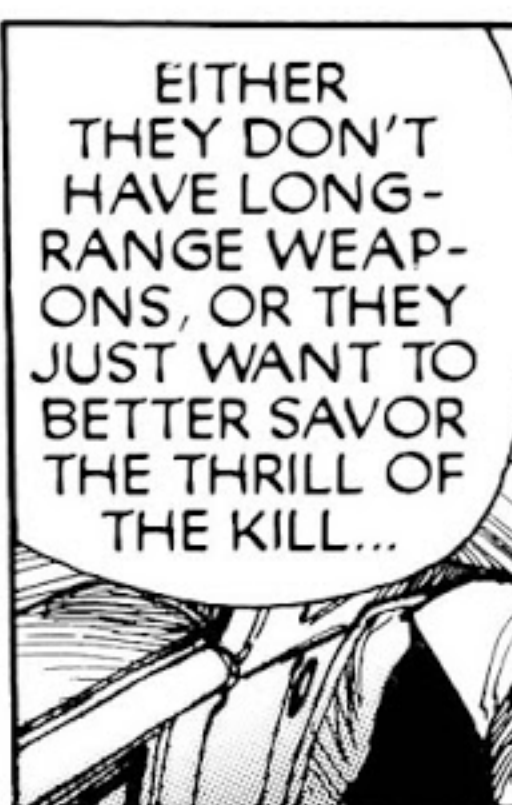
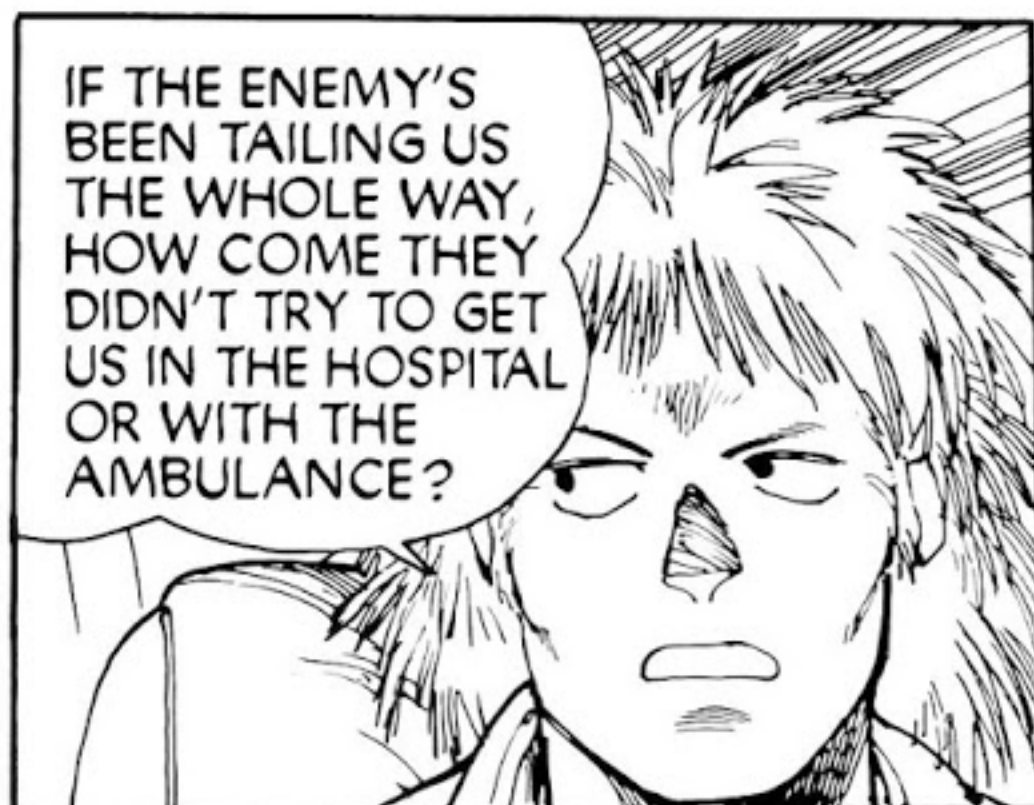
I FEEL  
LIKE I'M  
IN SOME  
GRADE-B  
COP  
MOVIE...



TOGUSA--  
WHERE'S  
THE  
BACK-UP?

THERE'S A FUCHIKOMA  
RUNNING ALONG THE  
BUILDING WALLS ONE  
HUNDRED YARDS  
BEHIND, WEAPONS  
SYSTEMS LOCKED  
ON THE CAR  
TAILING US.

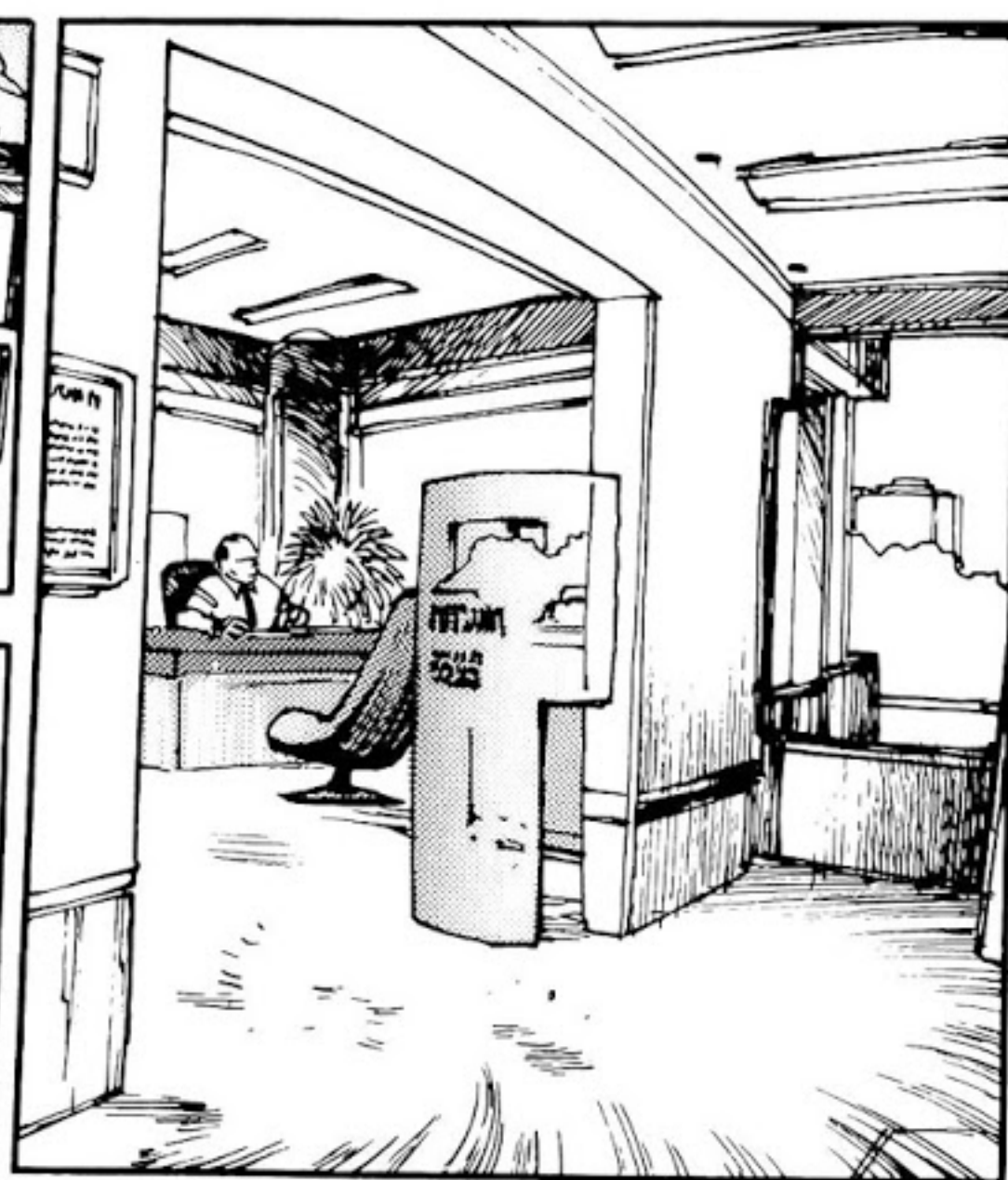
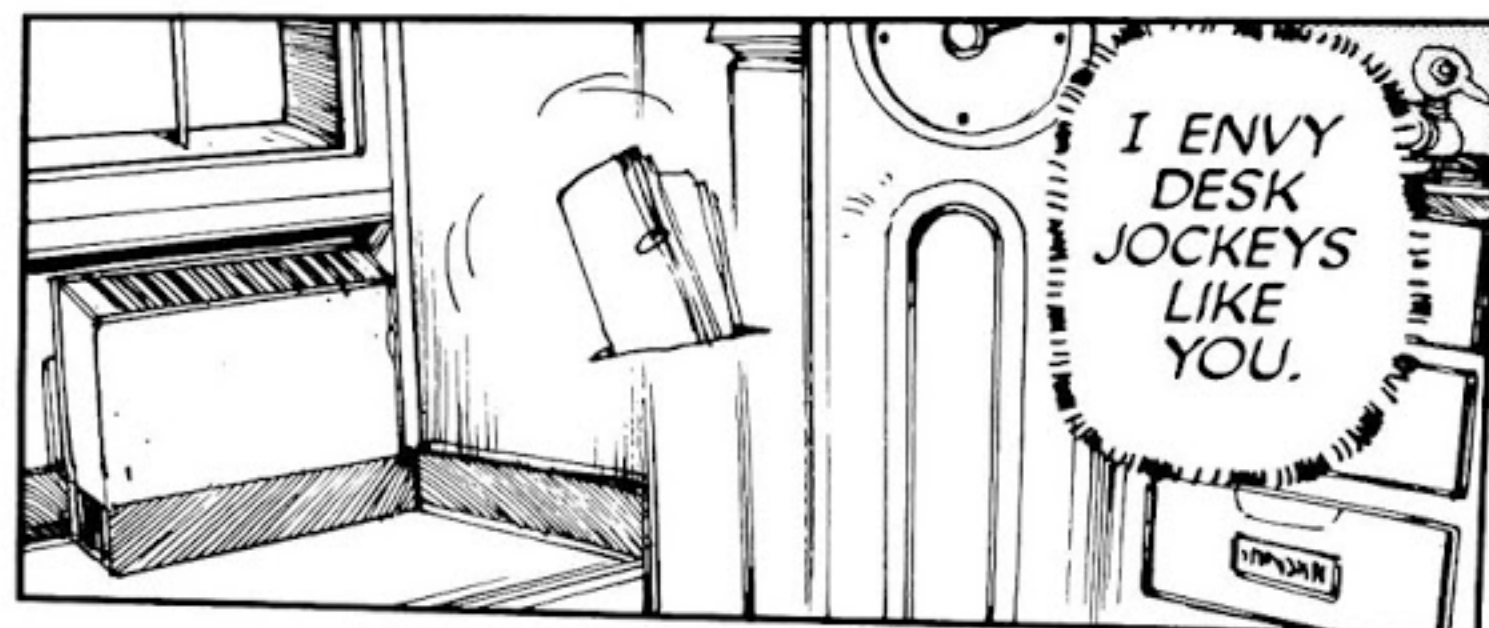




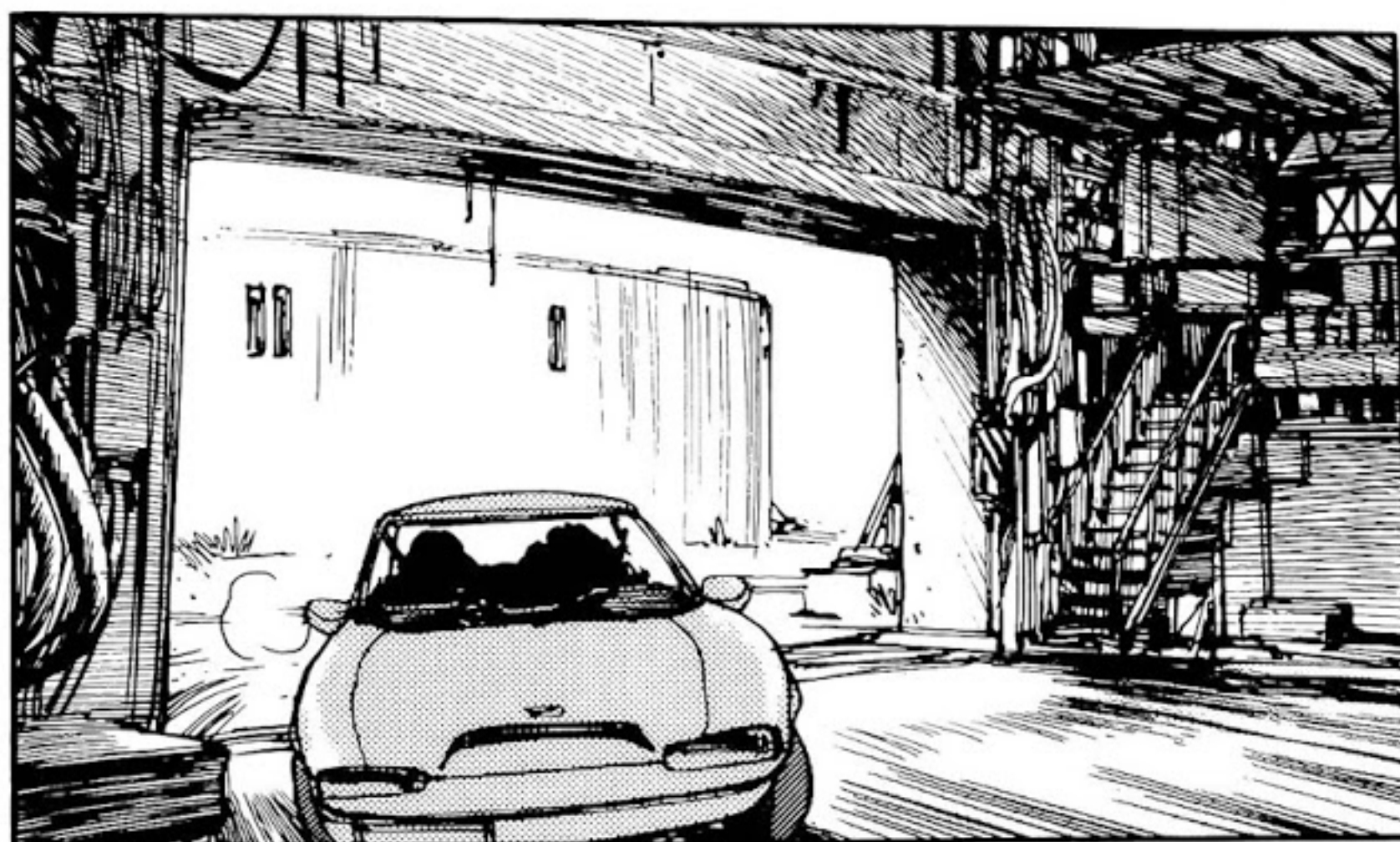
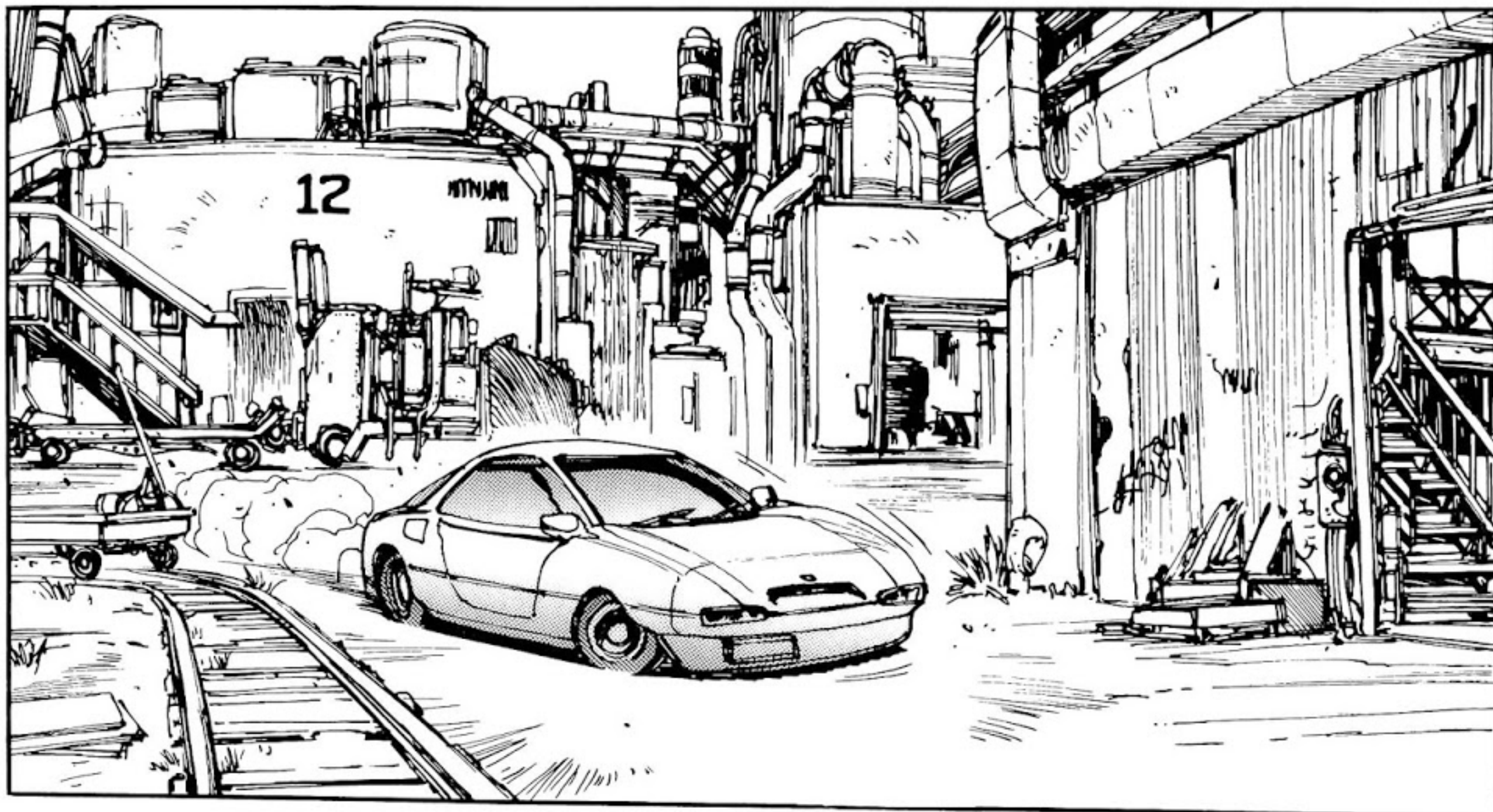












THIS FLOOR  
PLAN OF  
THE PLANT  
LOOKS LIKE  
IT PREDATES  
THE REMOD-  
ELING...

HELL, FORGET  
IT. WE'RE GONNA  
SETTLE ACCOUNTS  
SOON, AND BE-  
SIDES, FUCHIKO-  
MA'S HERE...



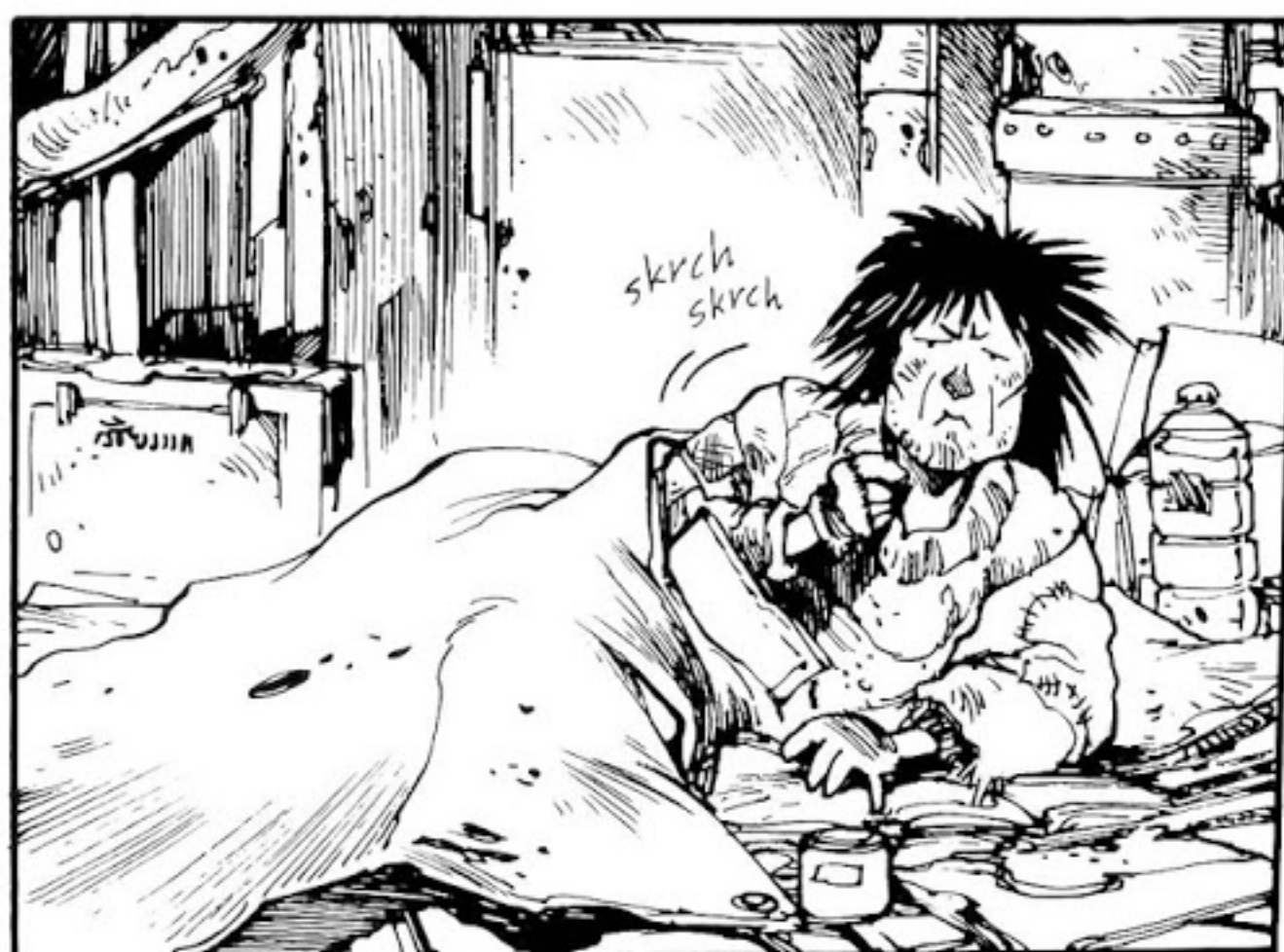
NOW TOGUSA,  
DON'T FORGET...  
**NEVER** UNDER-  
ESTIMATE YOUR  
ENEMIES, EVEN  
IF THEY **SEEM**  
LIKE IDIOTS...



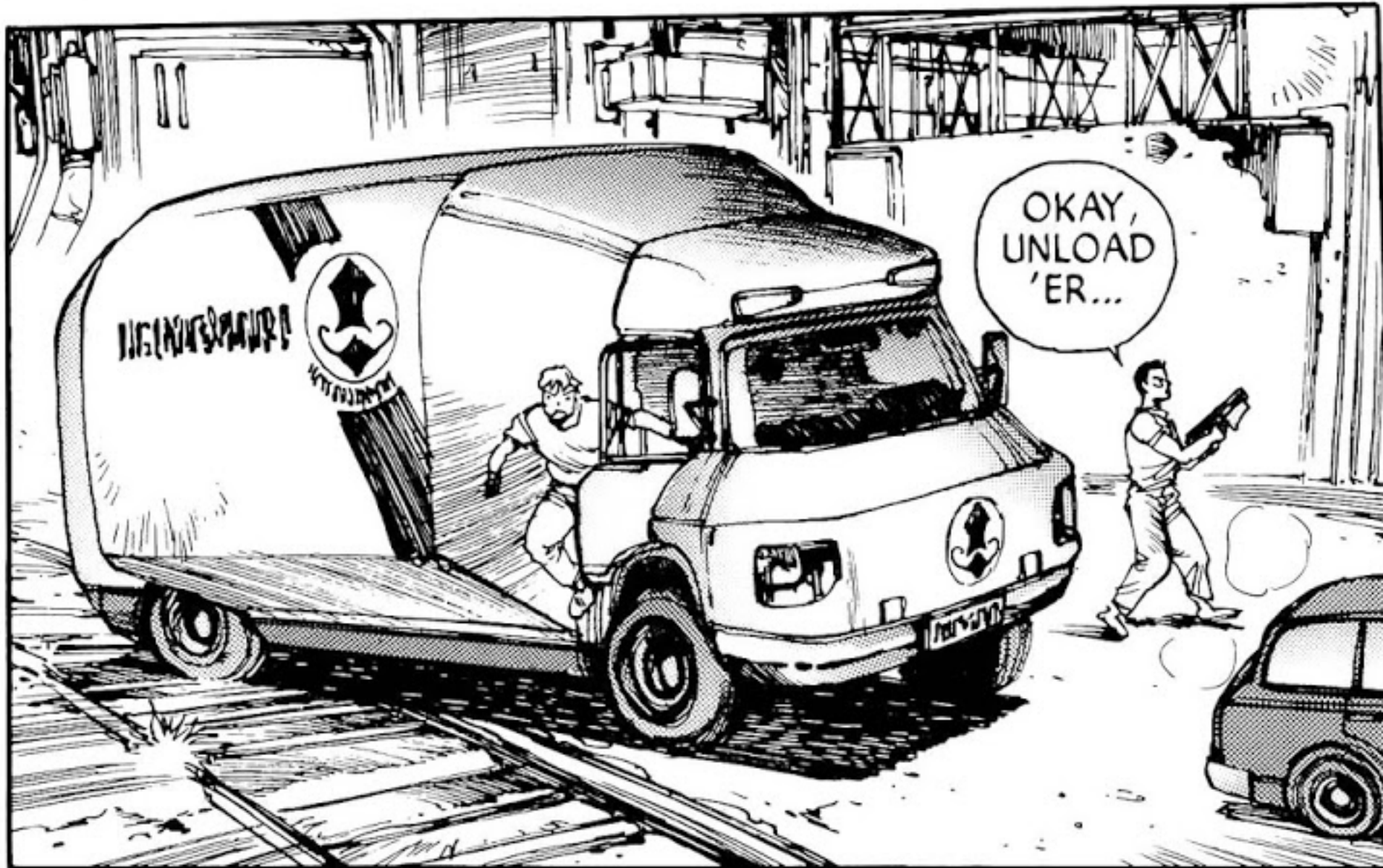
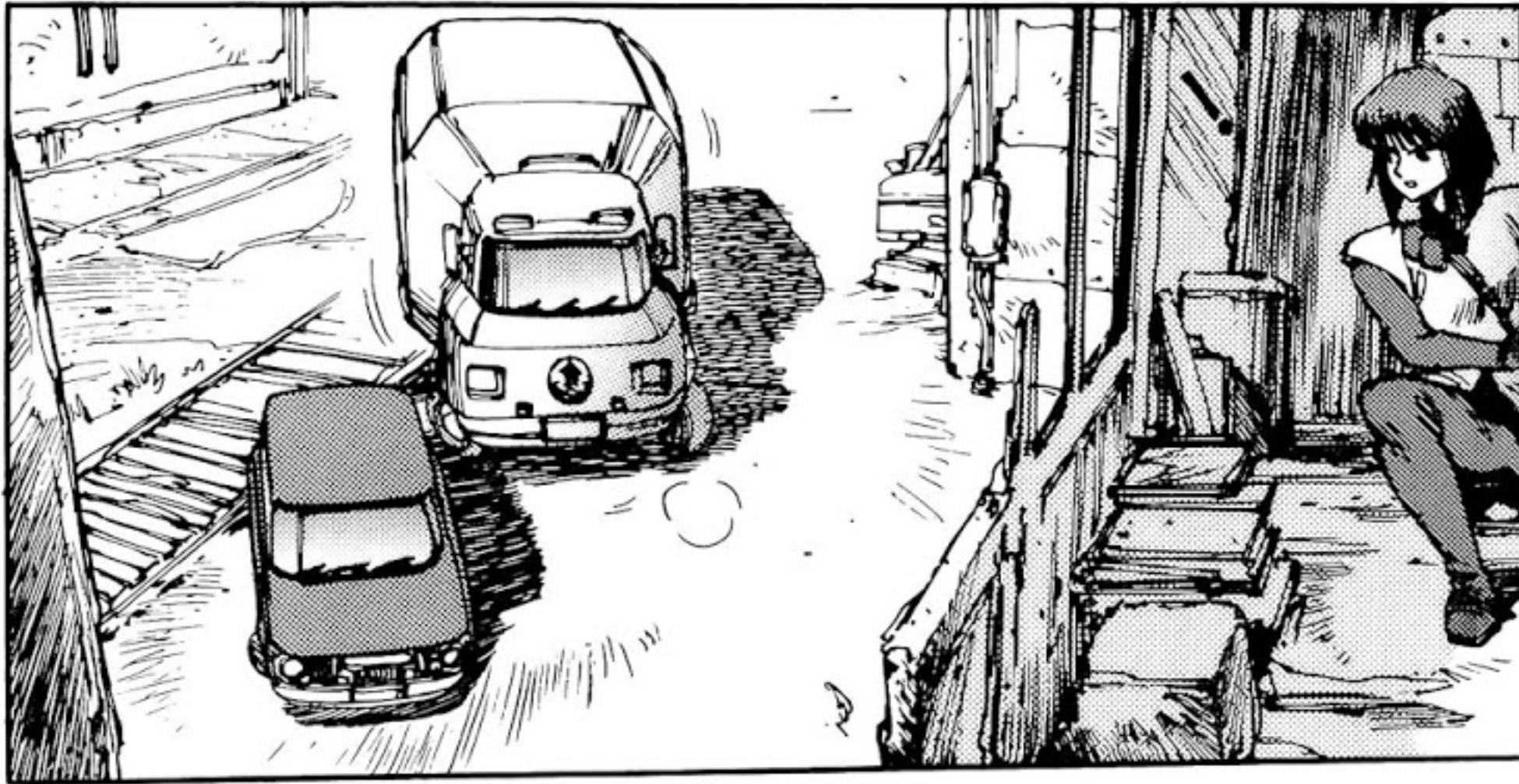
WELL,  
WELL,  
WELL...



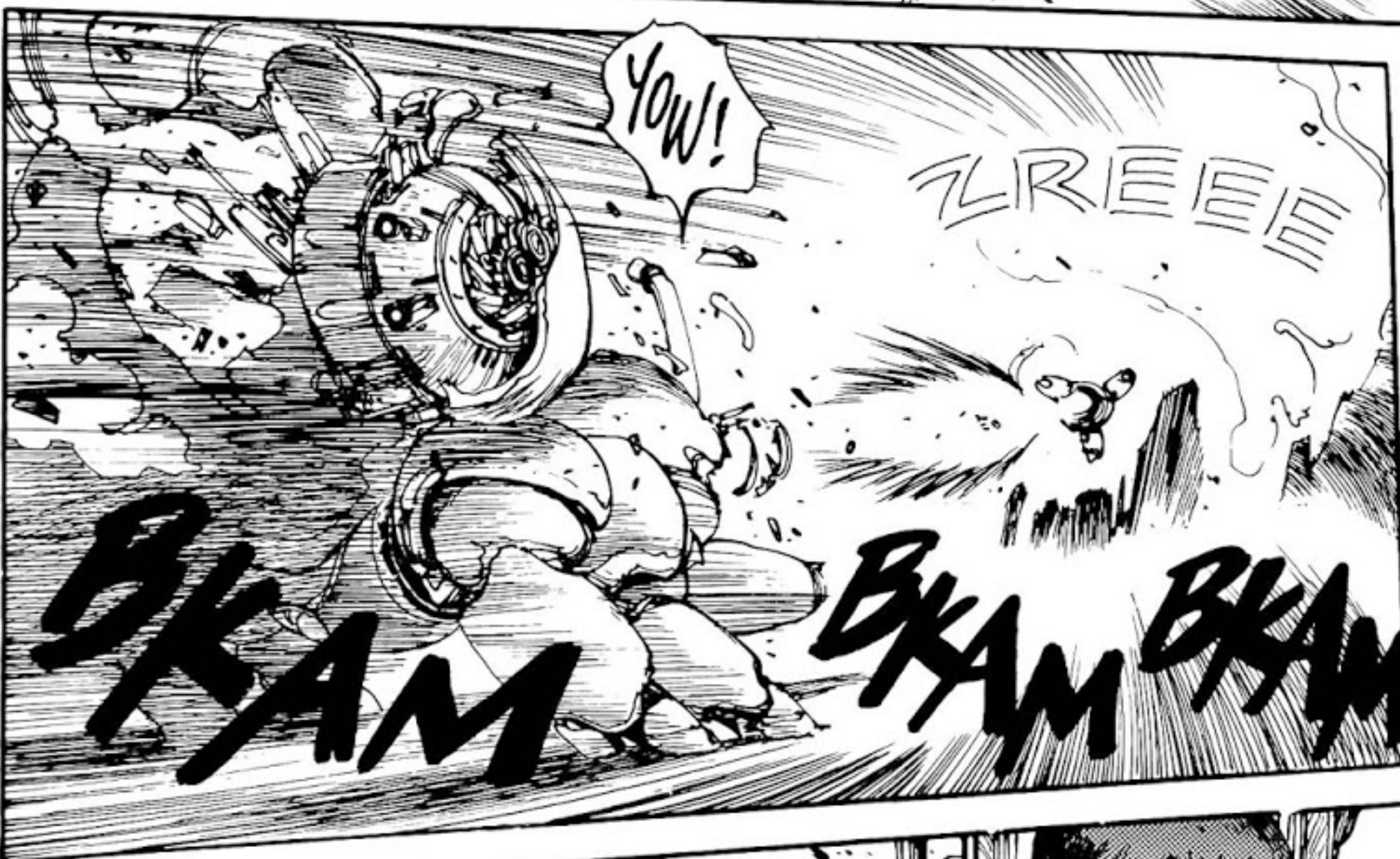




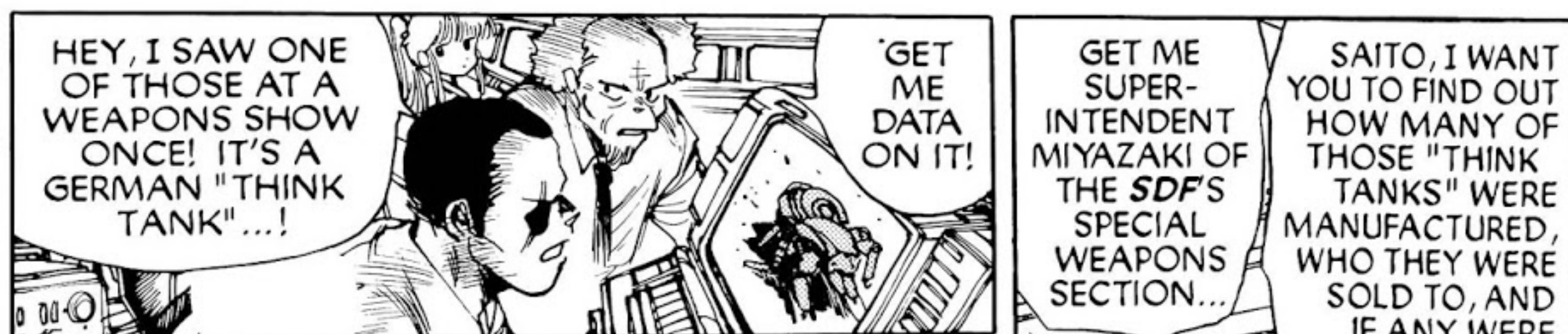
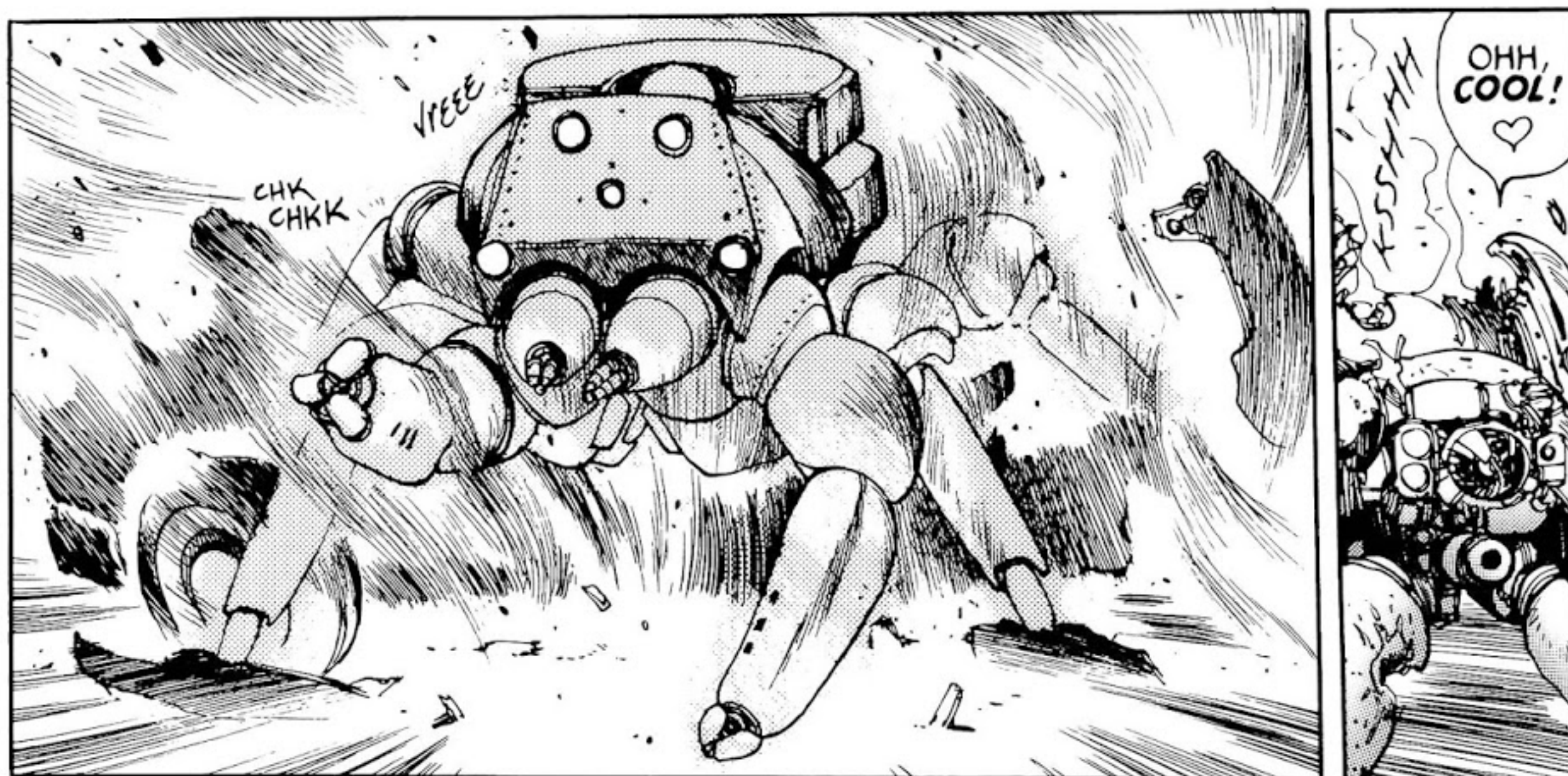




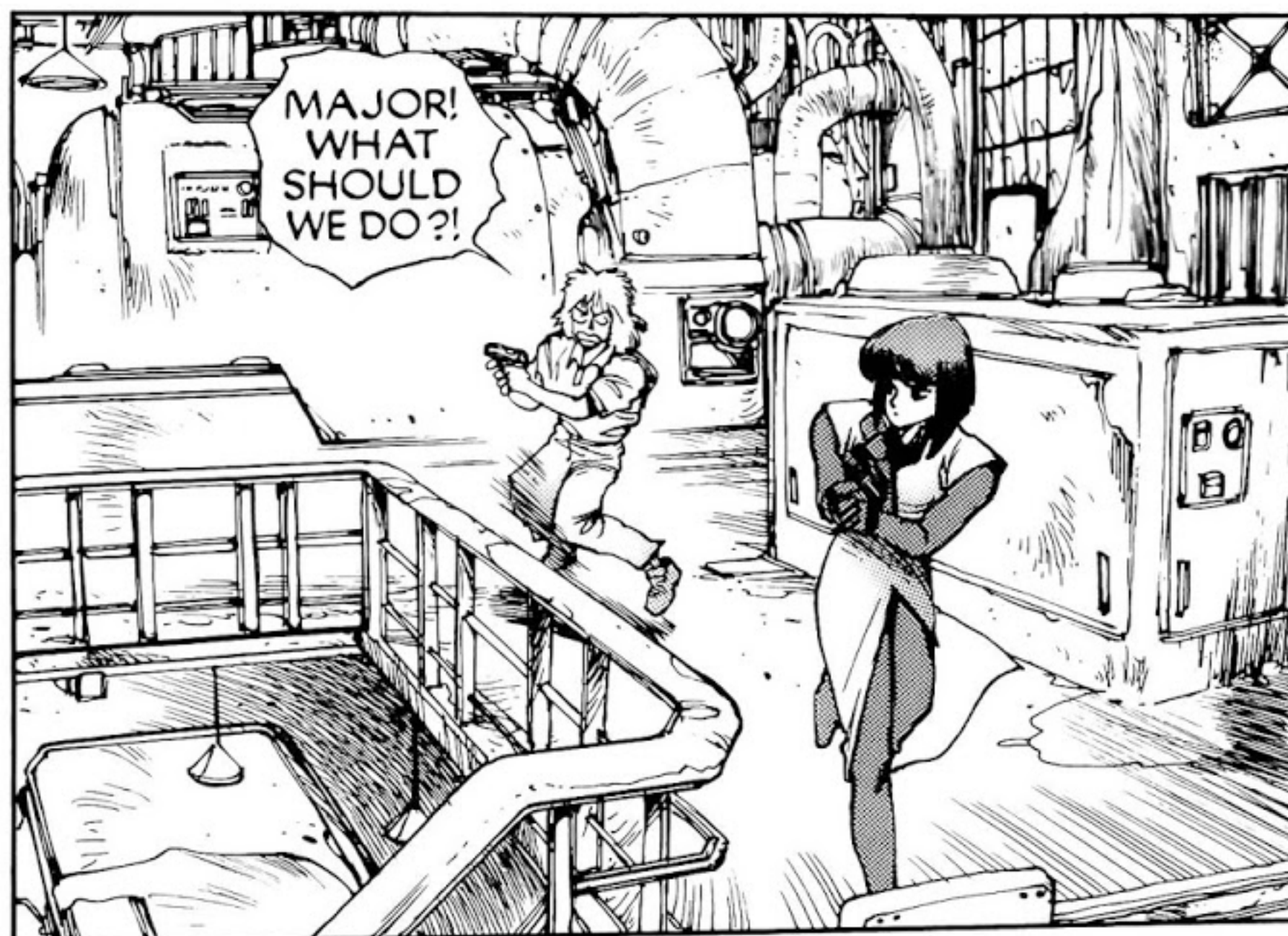












MAJOR!  
WHAT  
SHOULD  
WE DO?!



IT'LL TAKE A GOOD  
TWENTY MINUTES FOR  
BOMA AND PAZ TO GET  
HERE, SO WE'VE GOTTA  
STALL 'EM. IF WE CAN  
JUST GET INTO OUR CAR  
AND MOVE TO THE EDGE  
OF THE FACTORY WE CAN  
GIVE THEIR "TROOPS"  
THE SLIP...



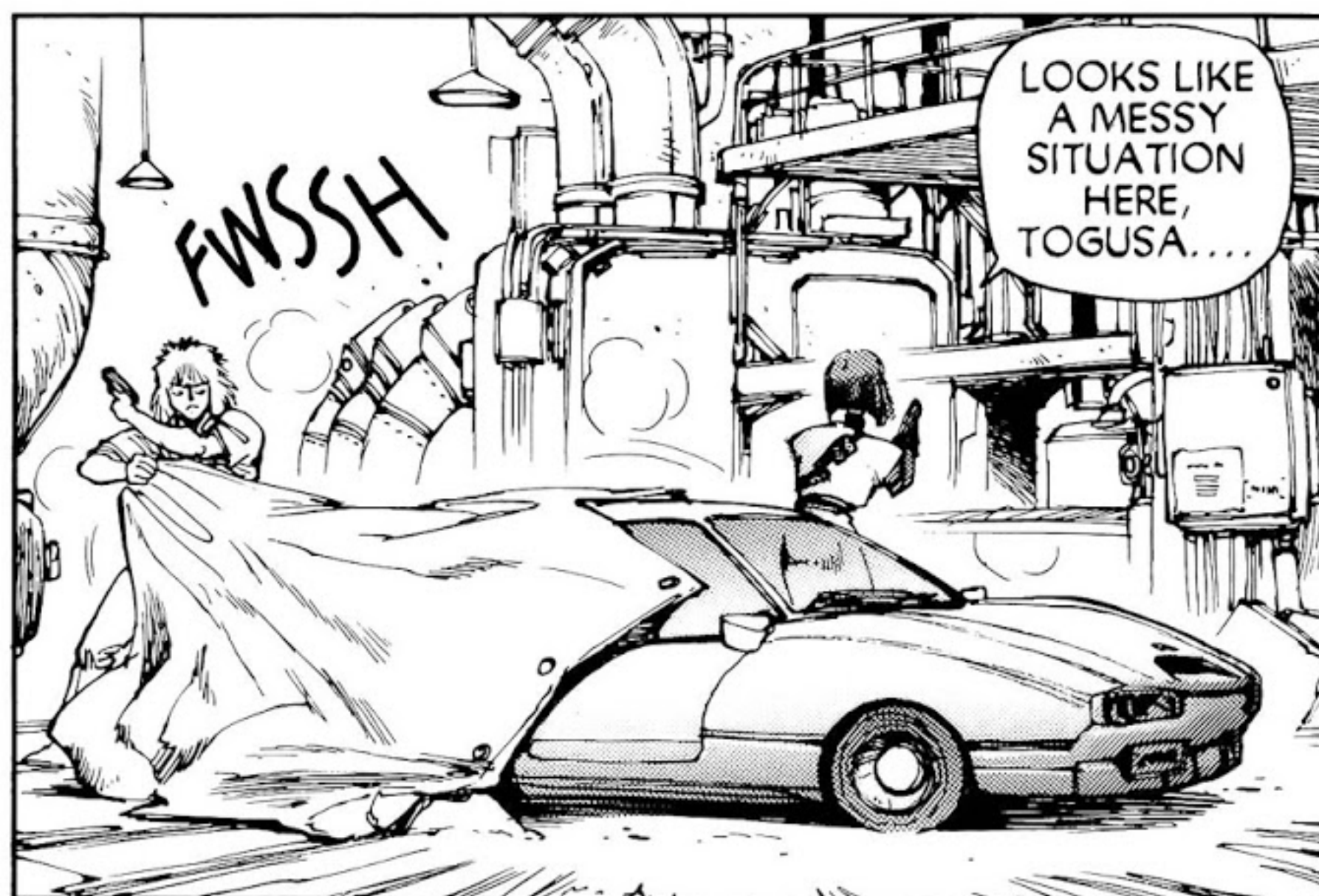
SURE SEEMS  
LIKE WE'RE  
DEALING  
WITH MORE  
THAN JUST  
SOMA'S  
TERRORIST  
PALS...



THEY'RE TOO  
WELL ORGANIZED  
AND ARMED TO  
BE AN UNDER-  
GROUND  
GROUP....



YOU MEAN  
THEY'RE A  
**LEGAL** ORGA-  
NIZATION  
HELPING  
SOMA?

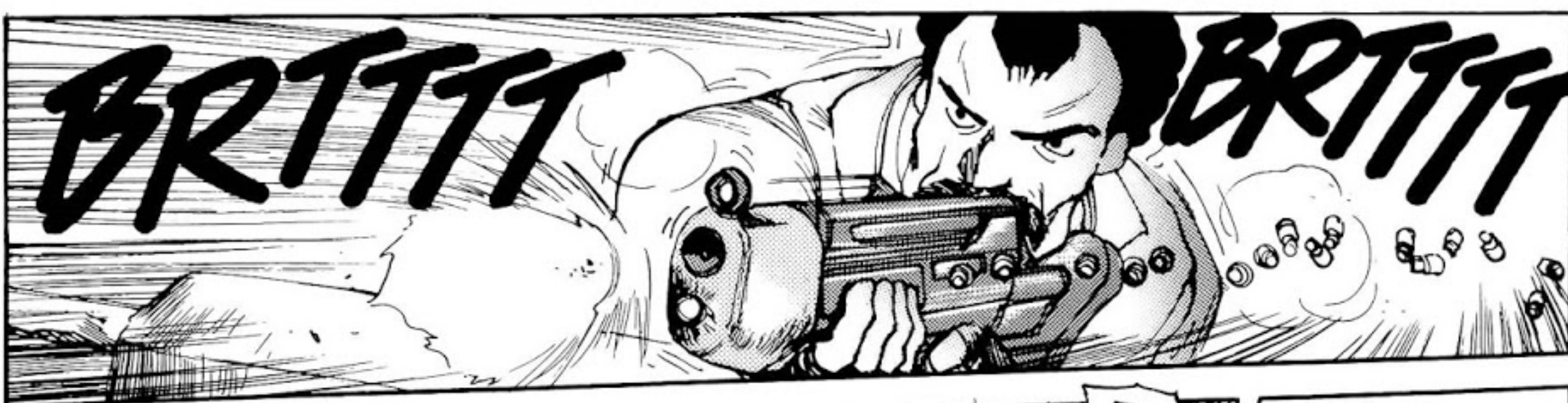
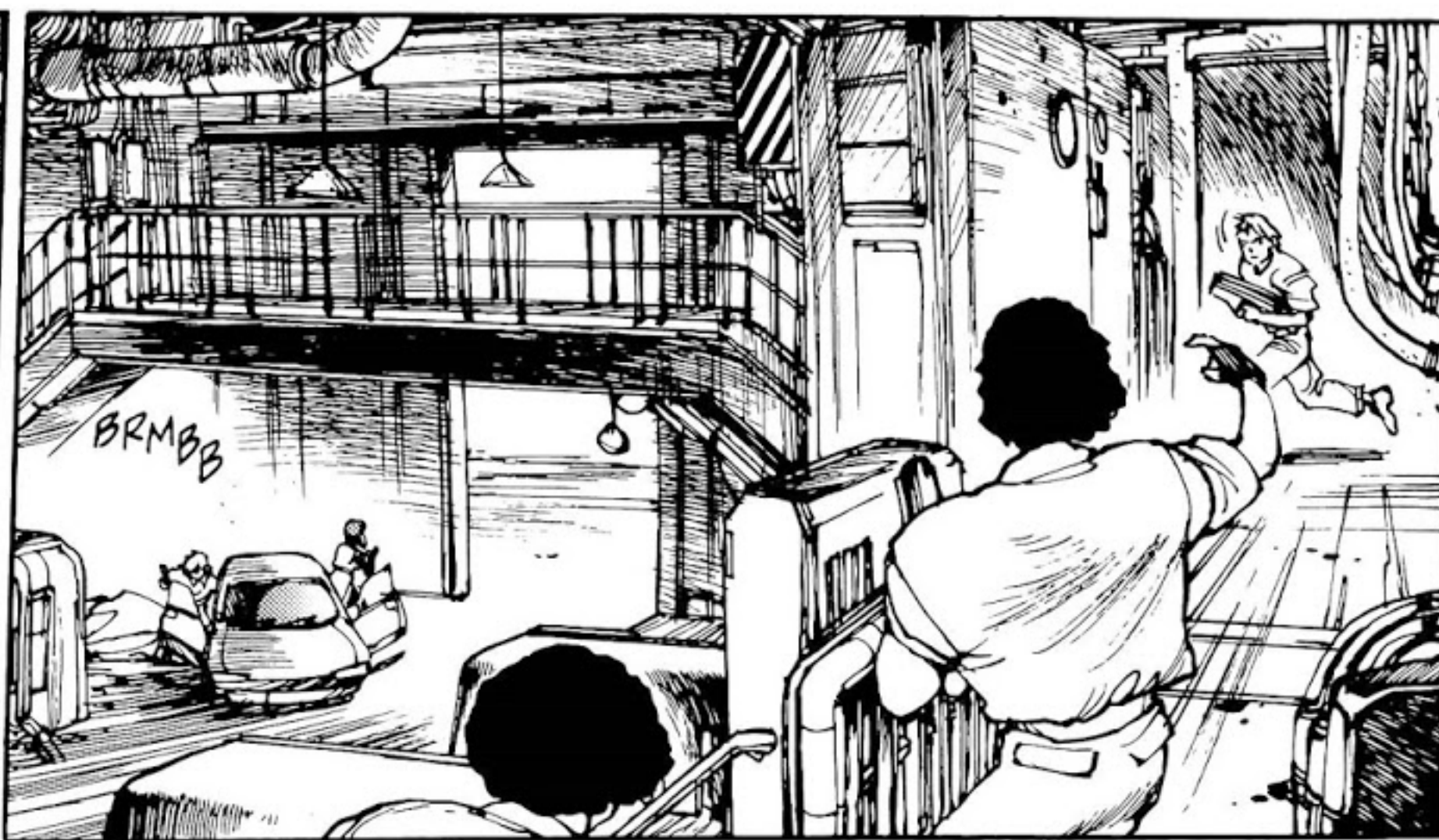


FWSSH

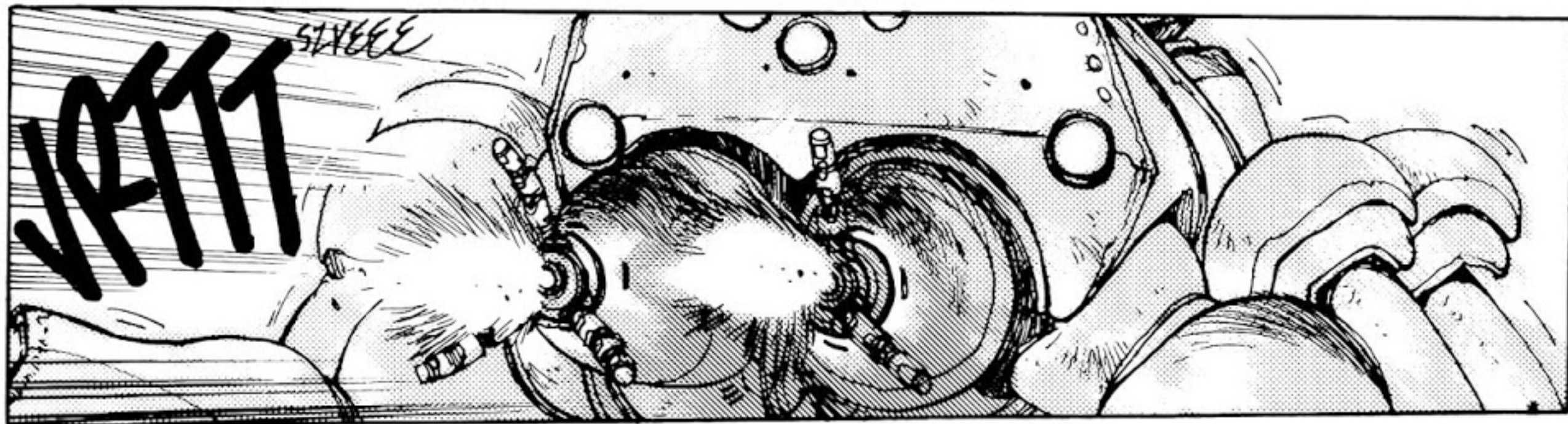
LOOKS LIKE  
A MESSY  
SITUATION  
HERE,  
TOGUSA....







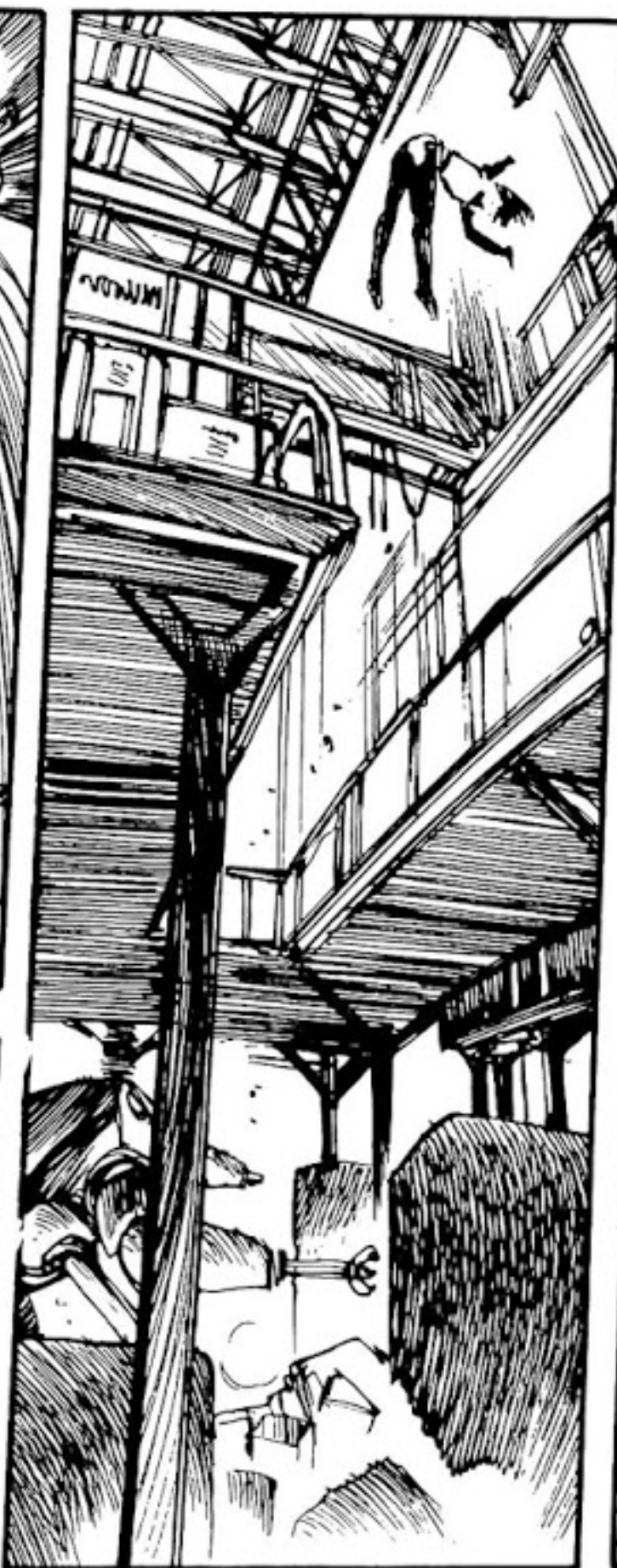
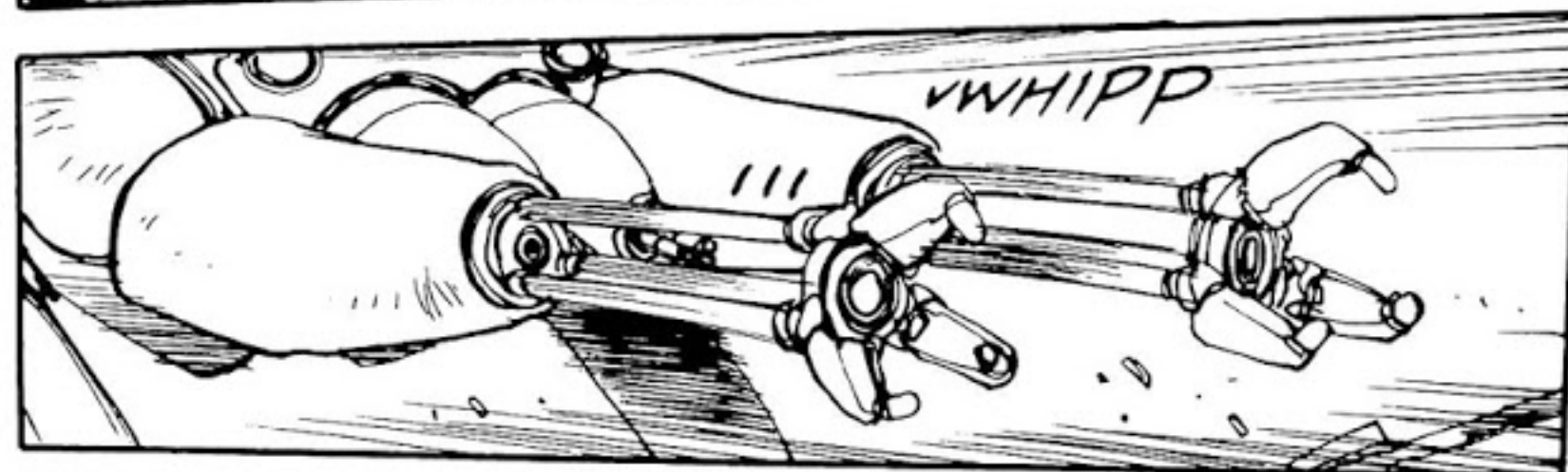
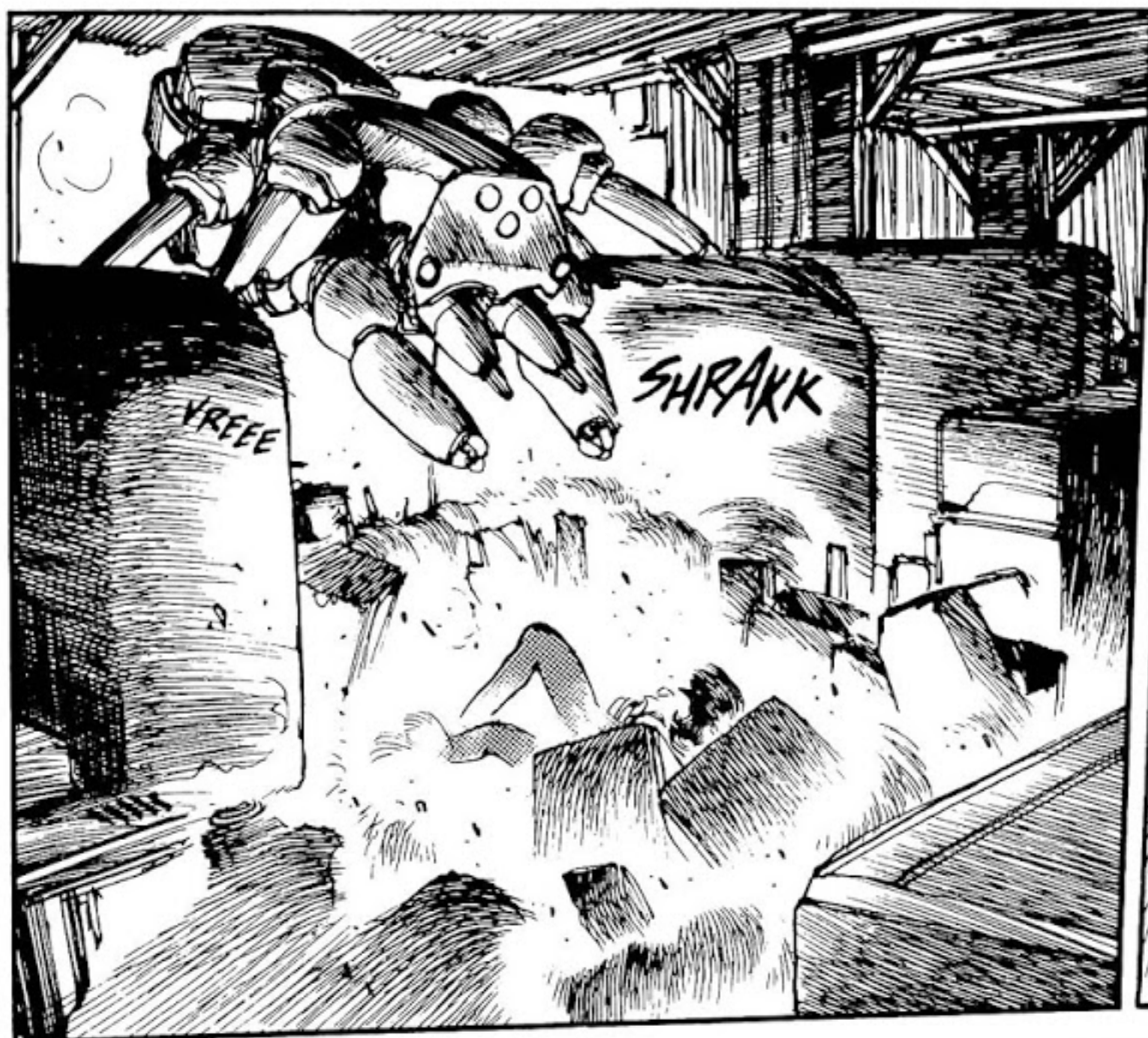




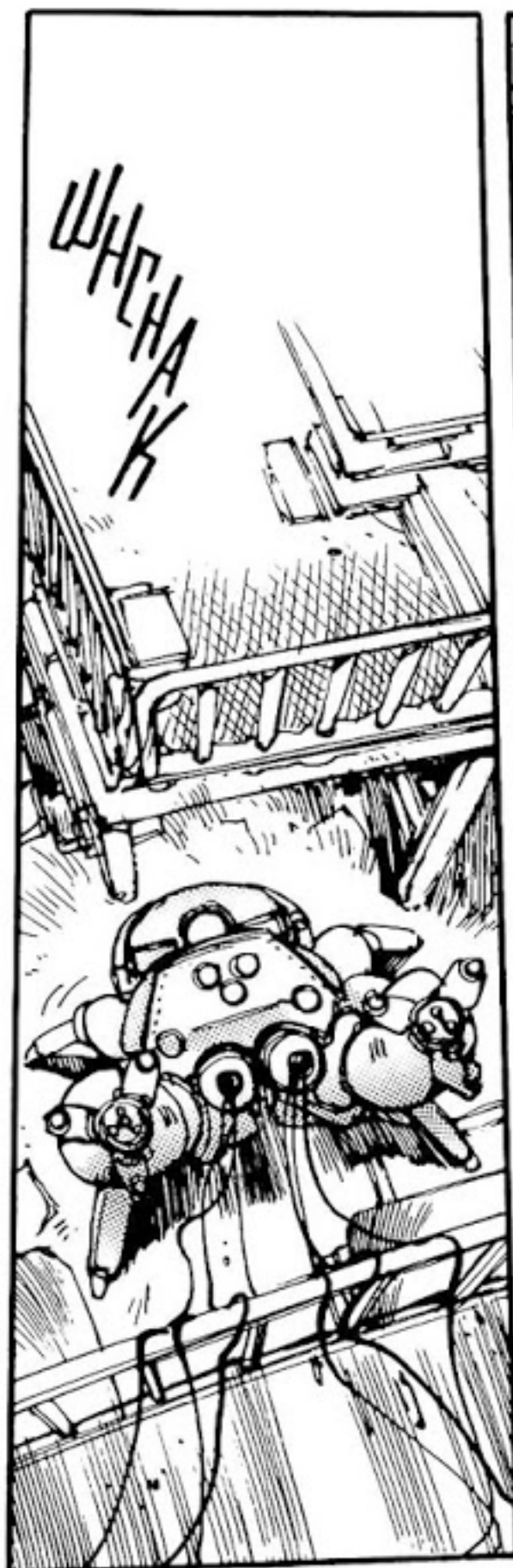




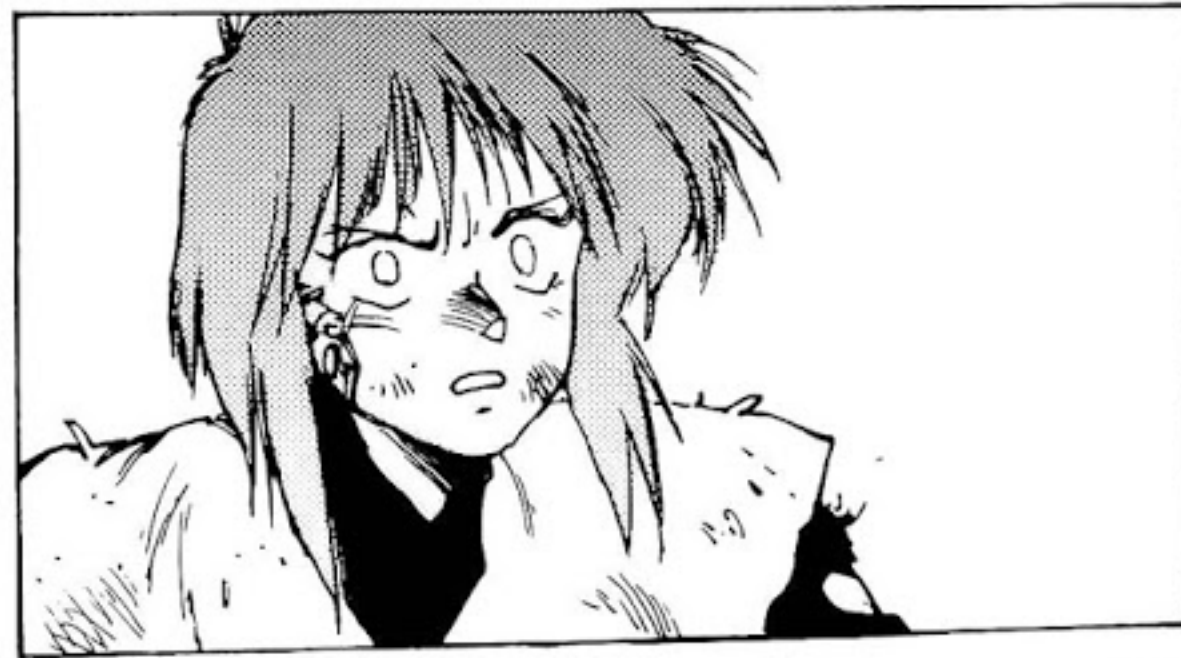
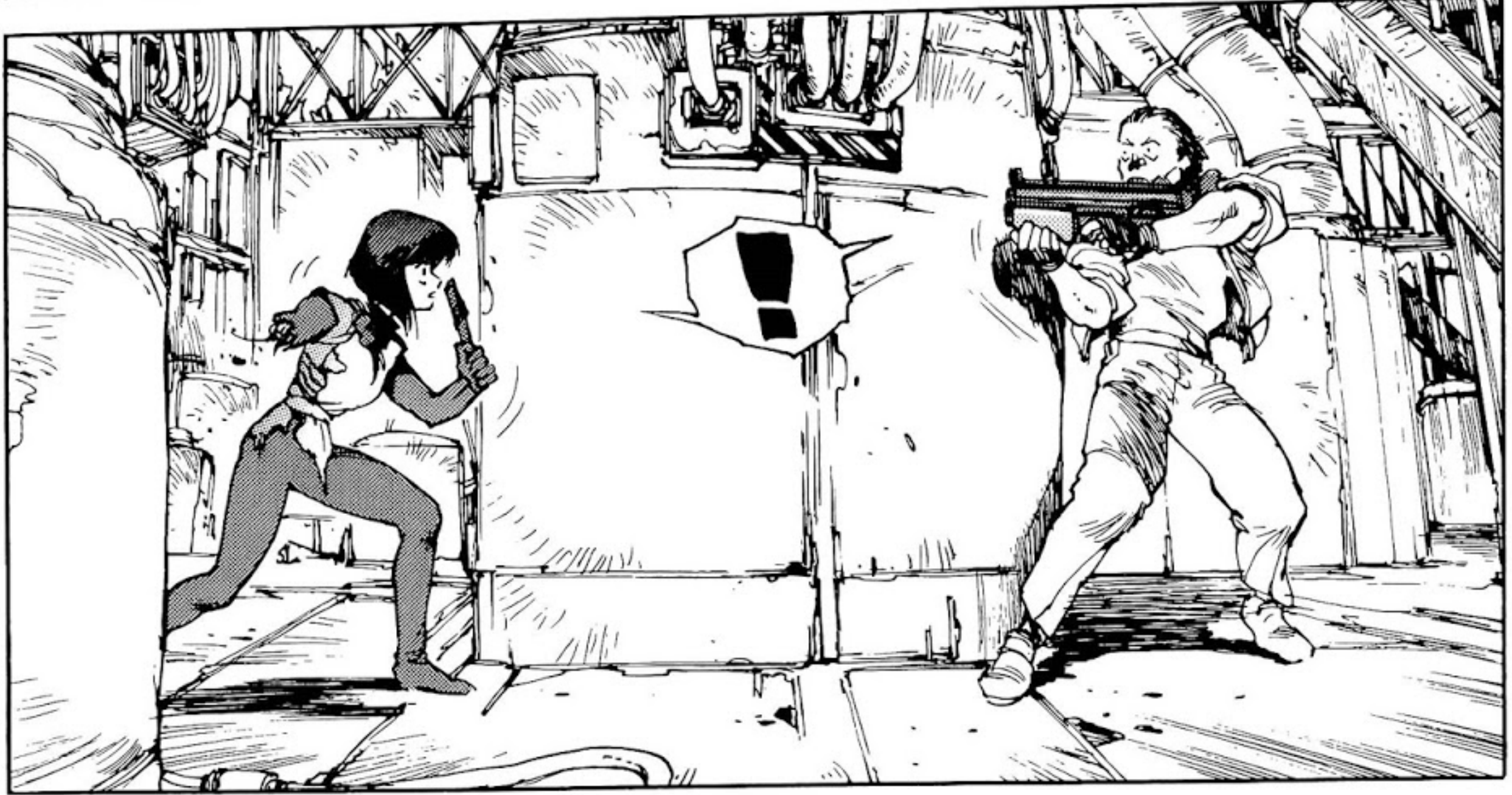




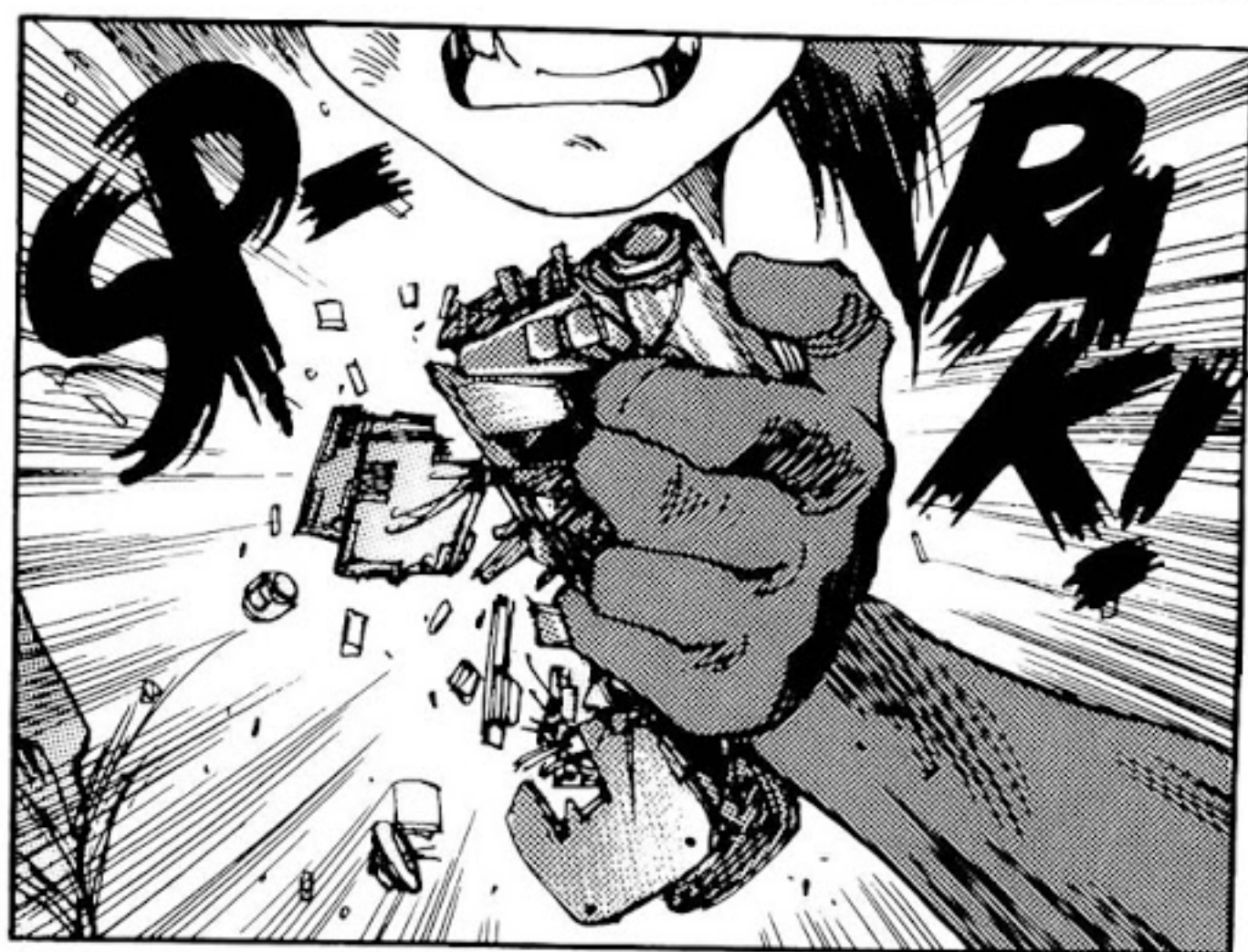
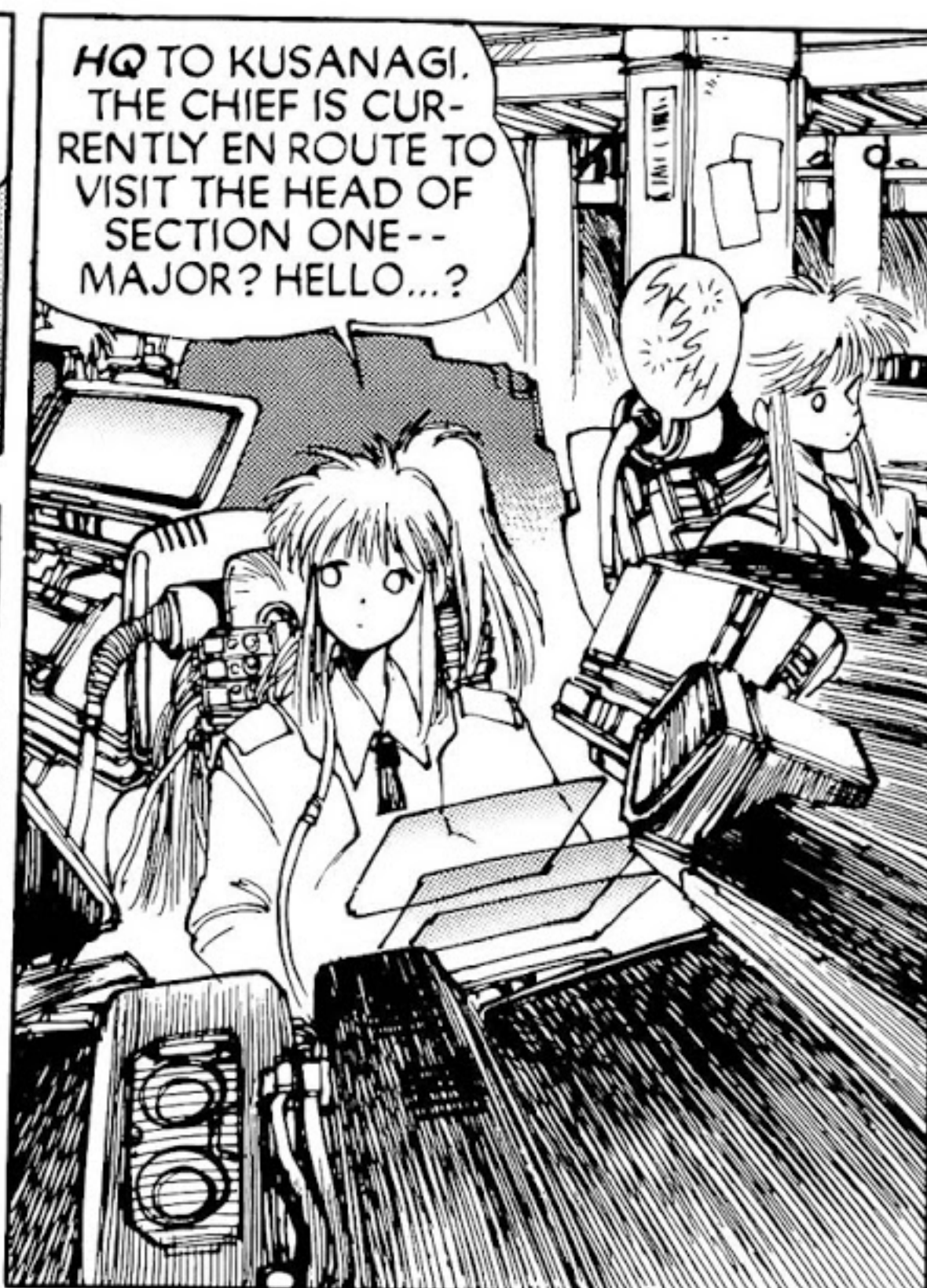
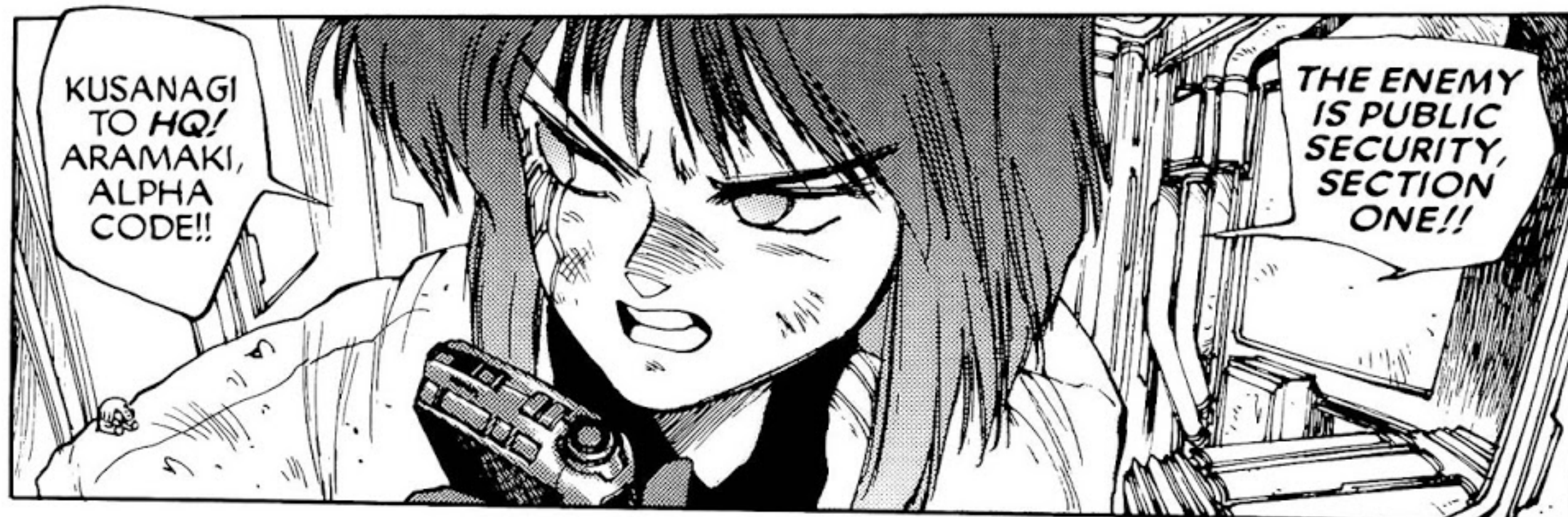




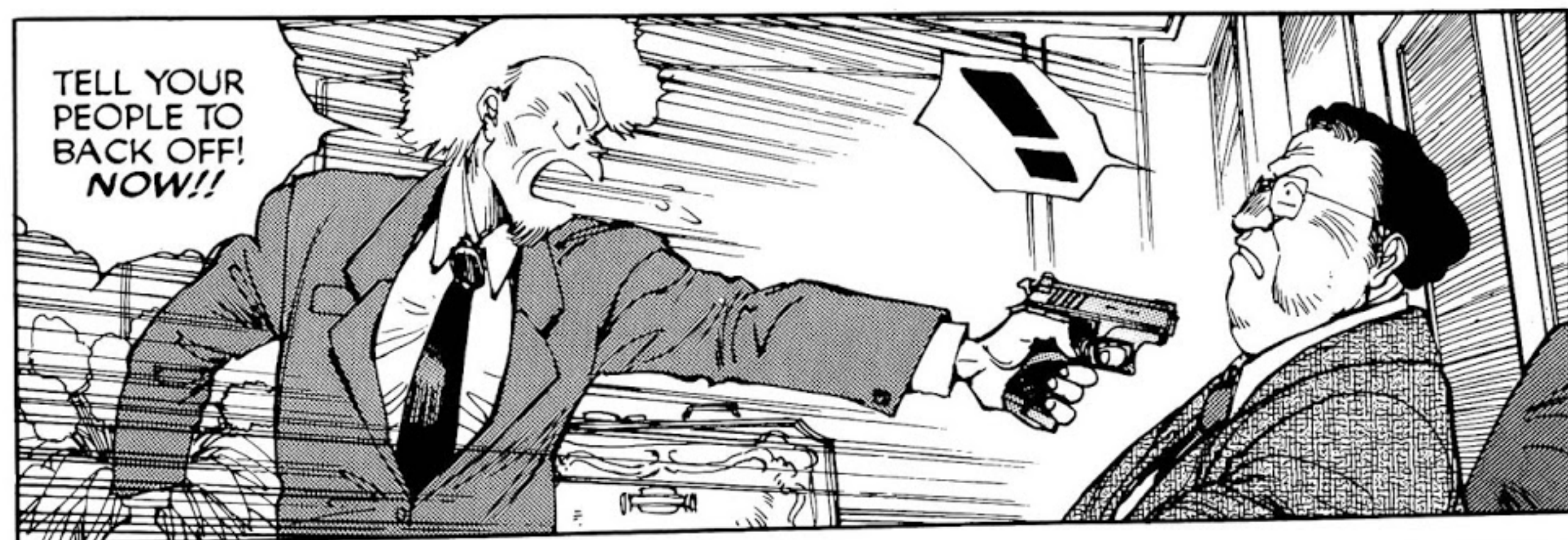
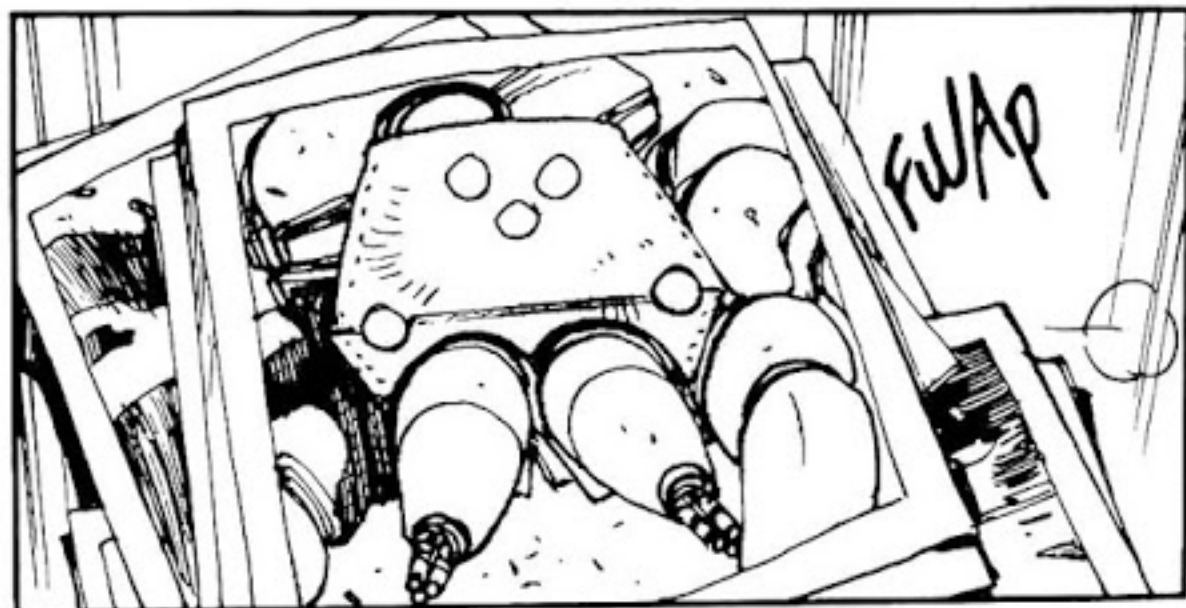




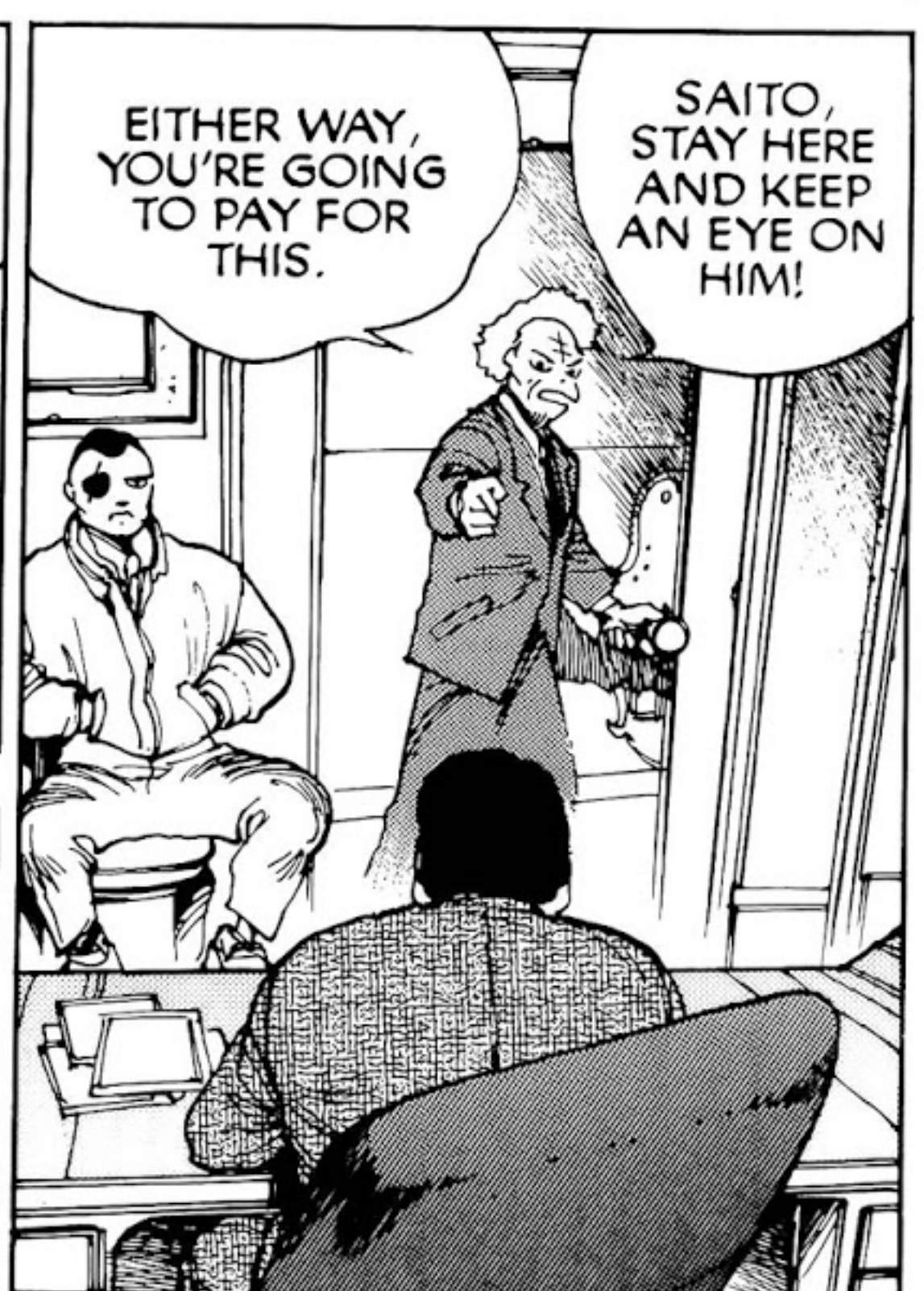
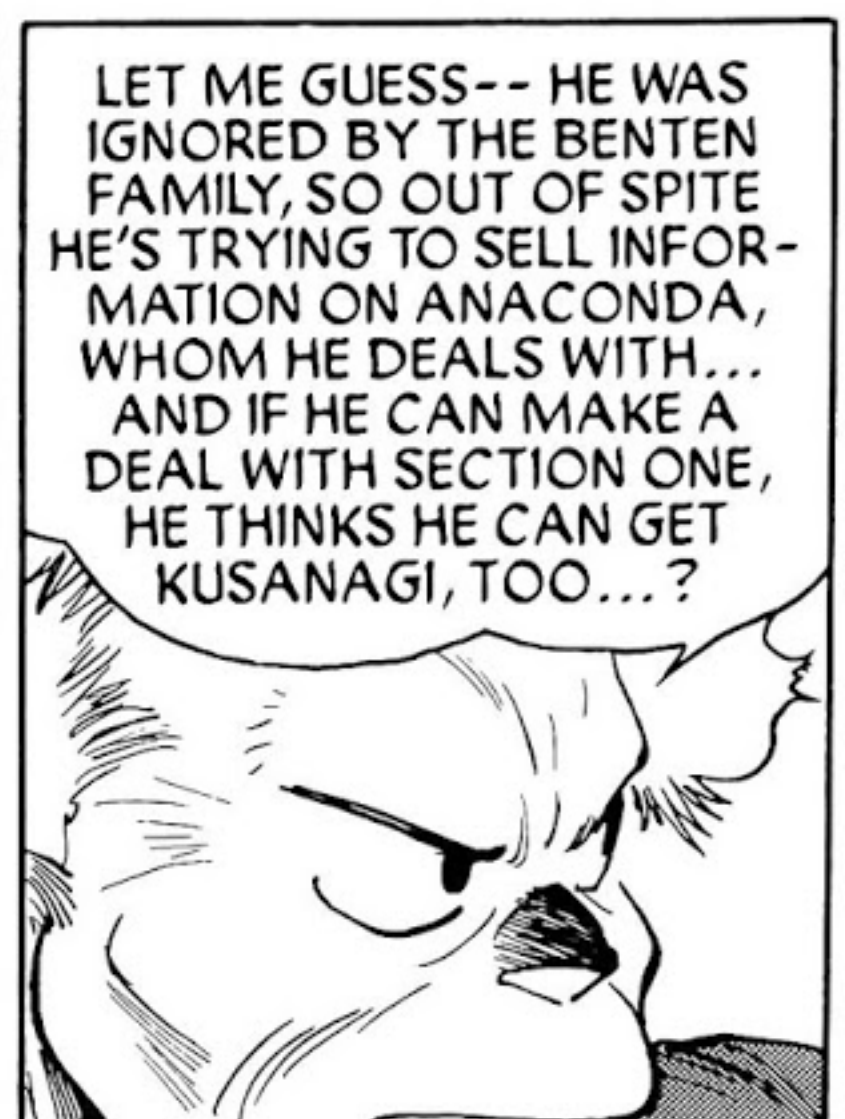
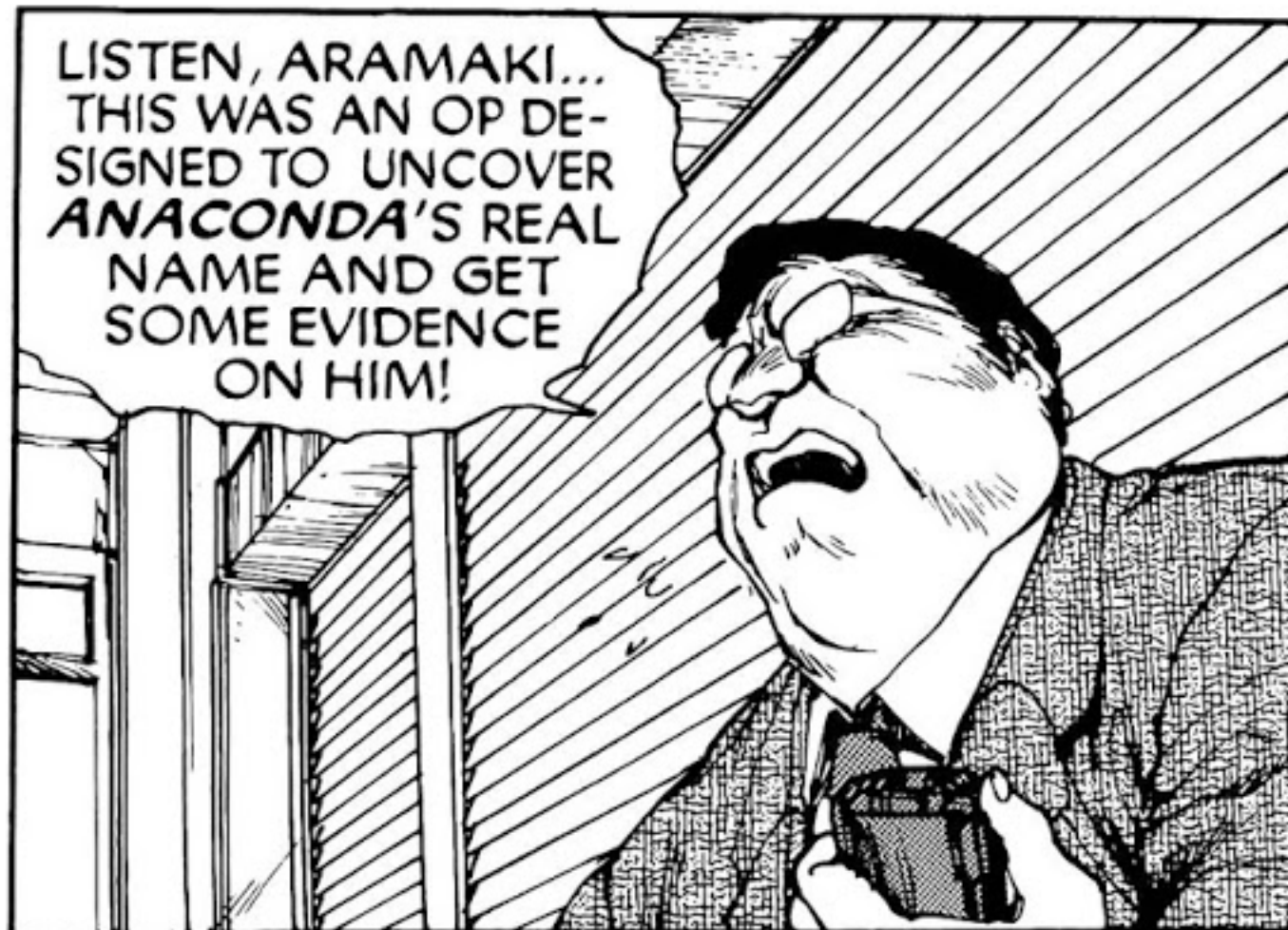








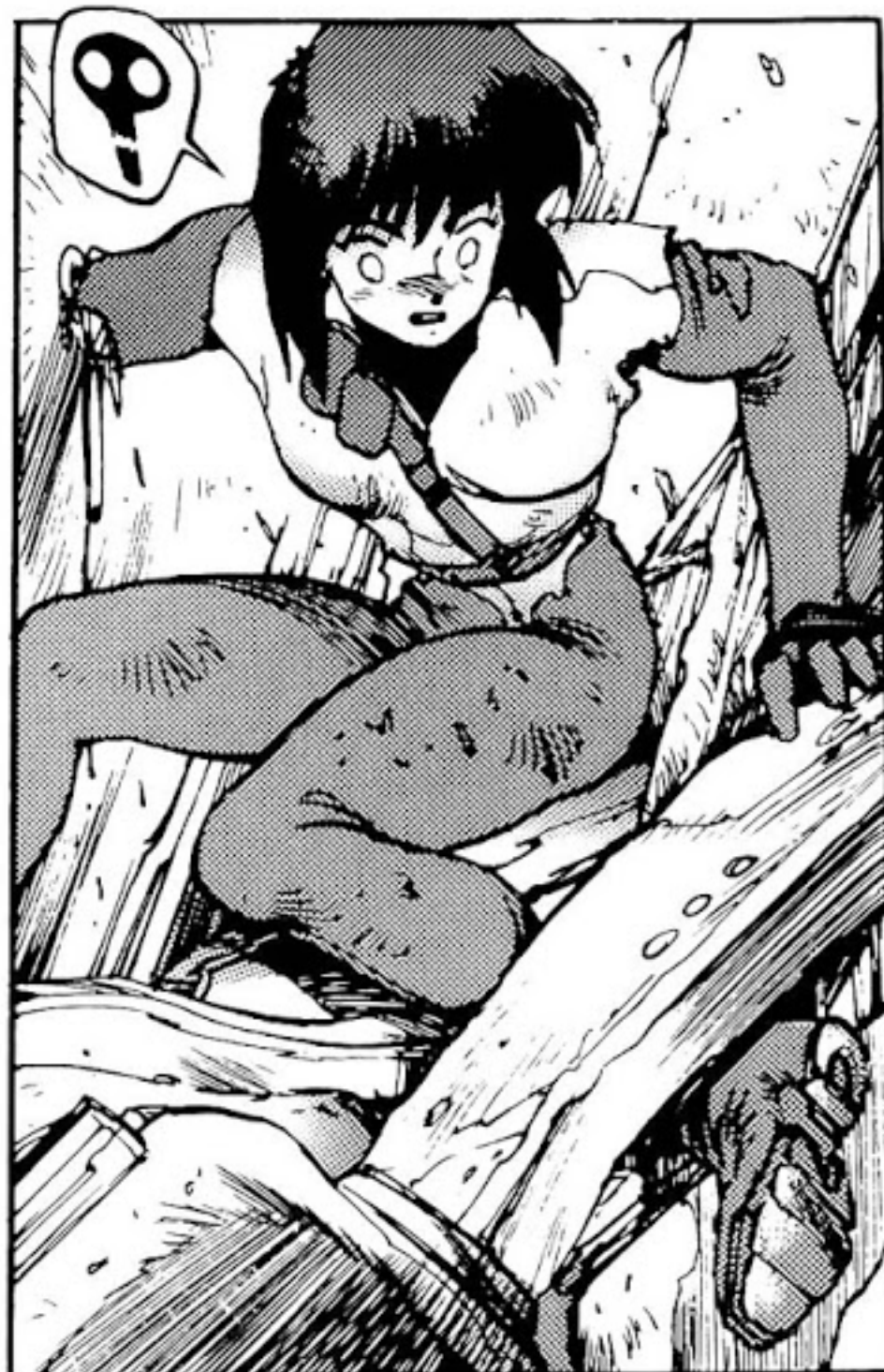
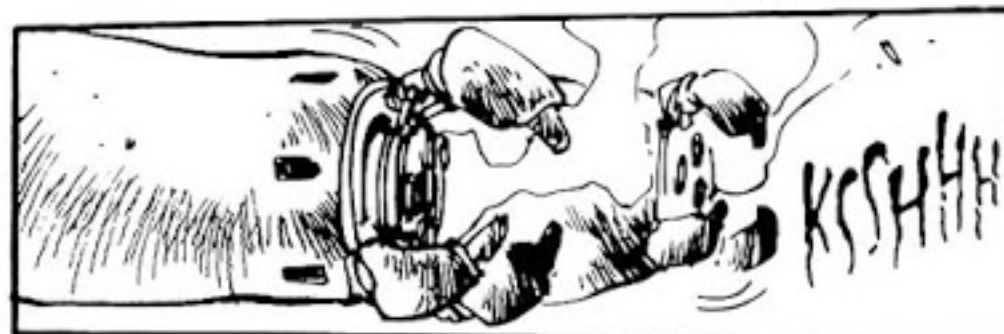
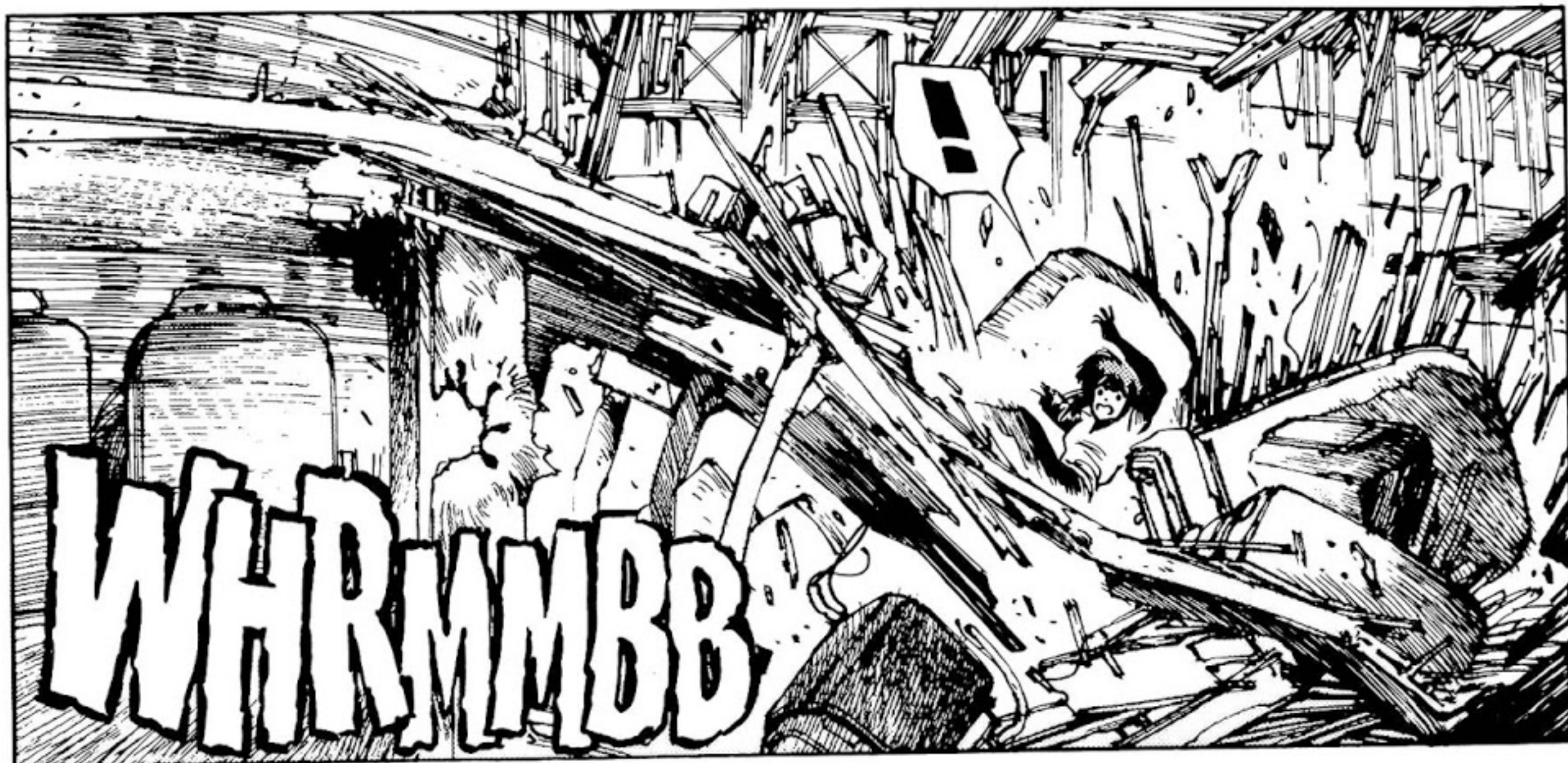




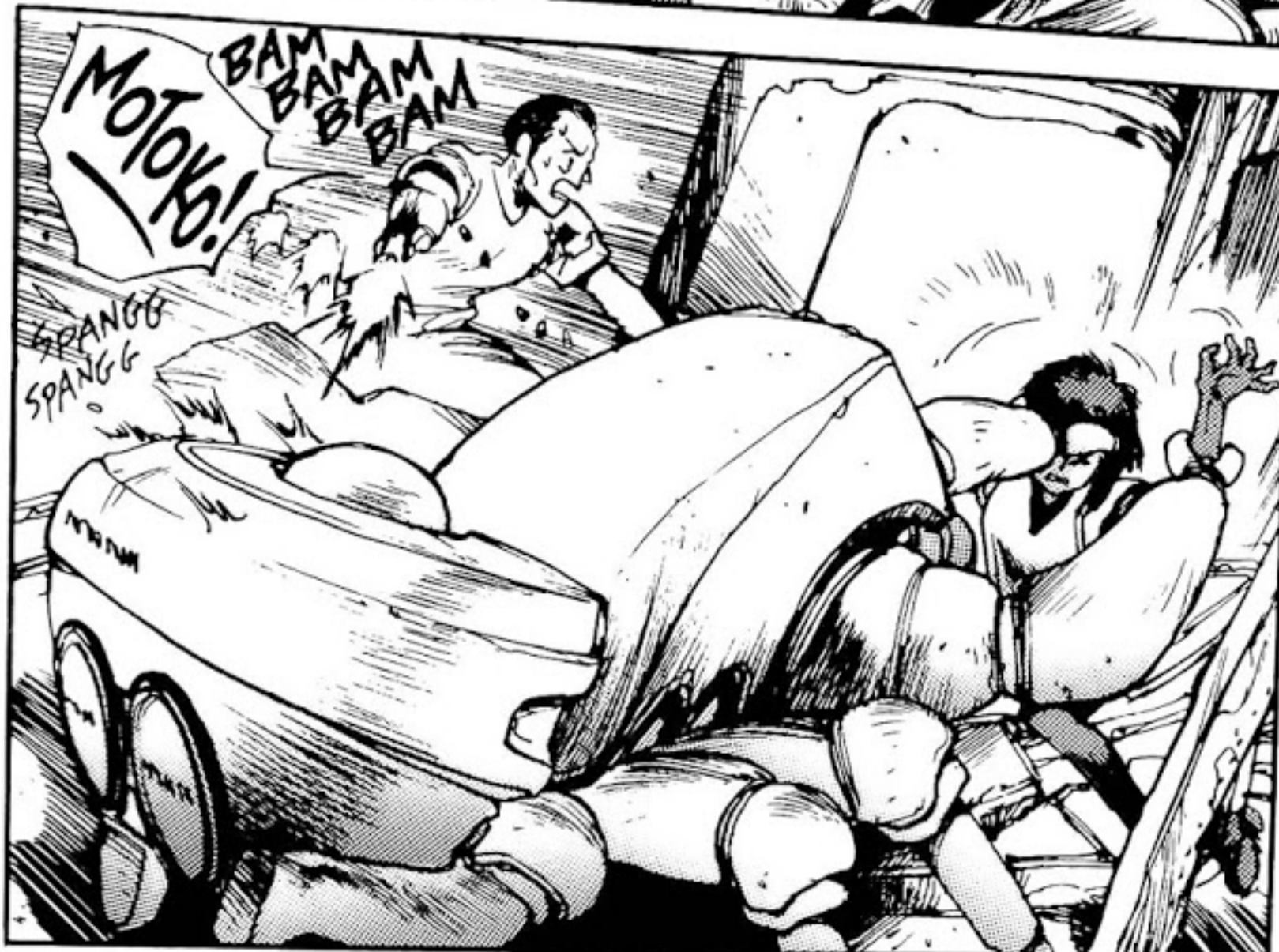
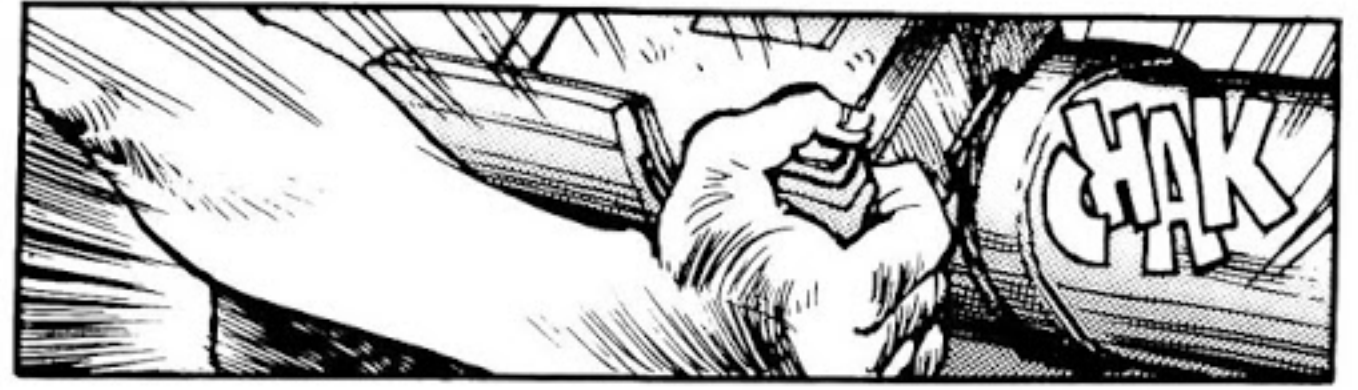
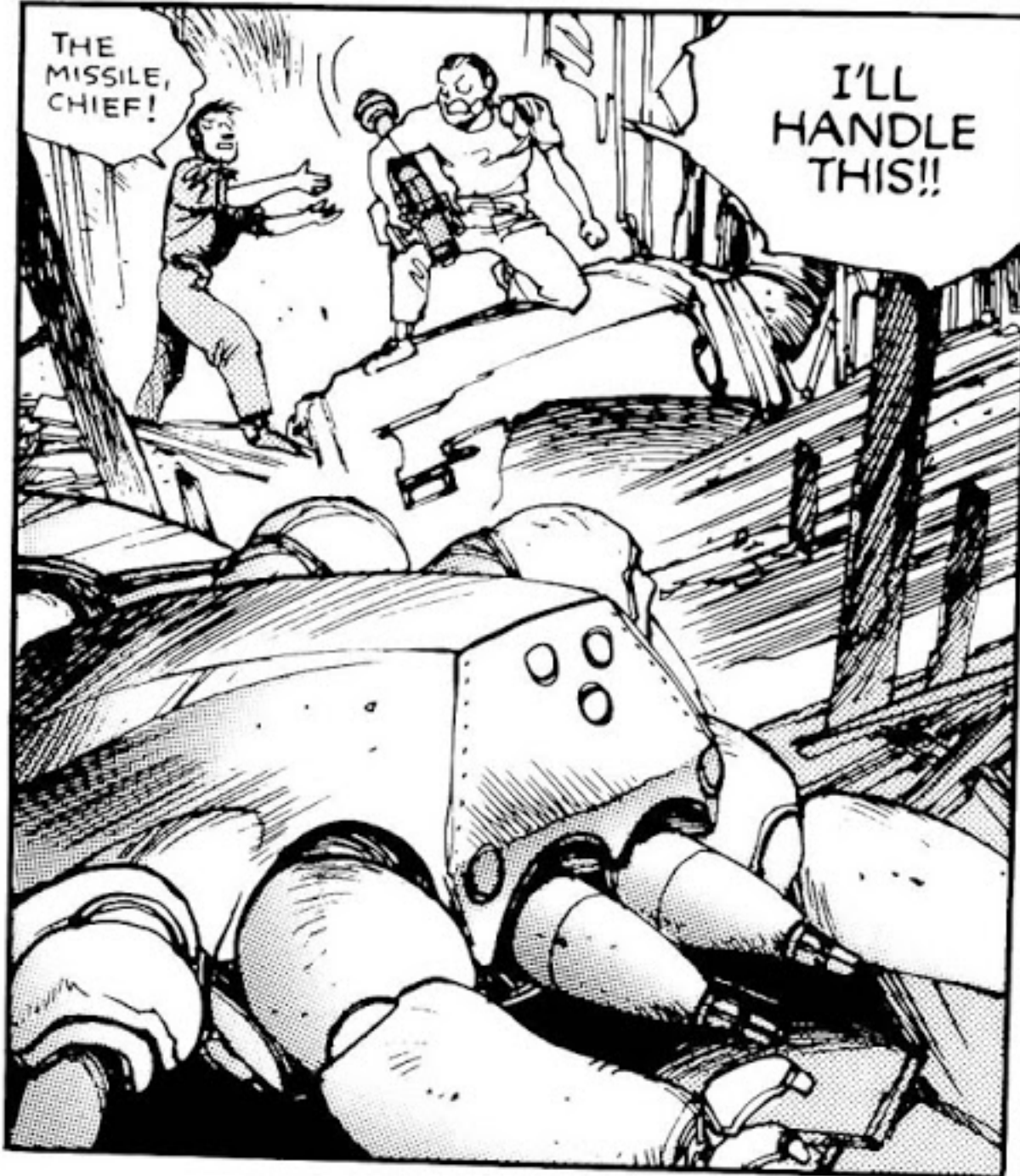




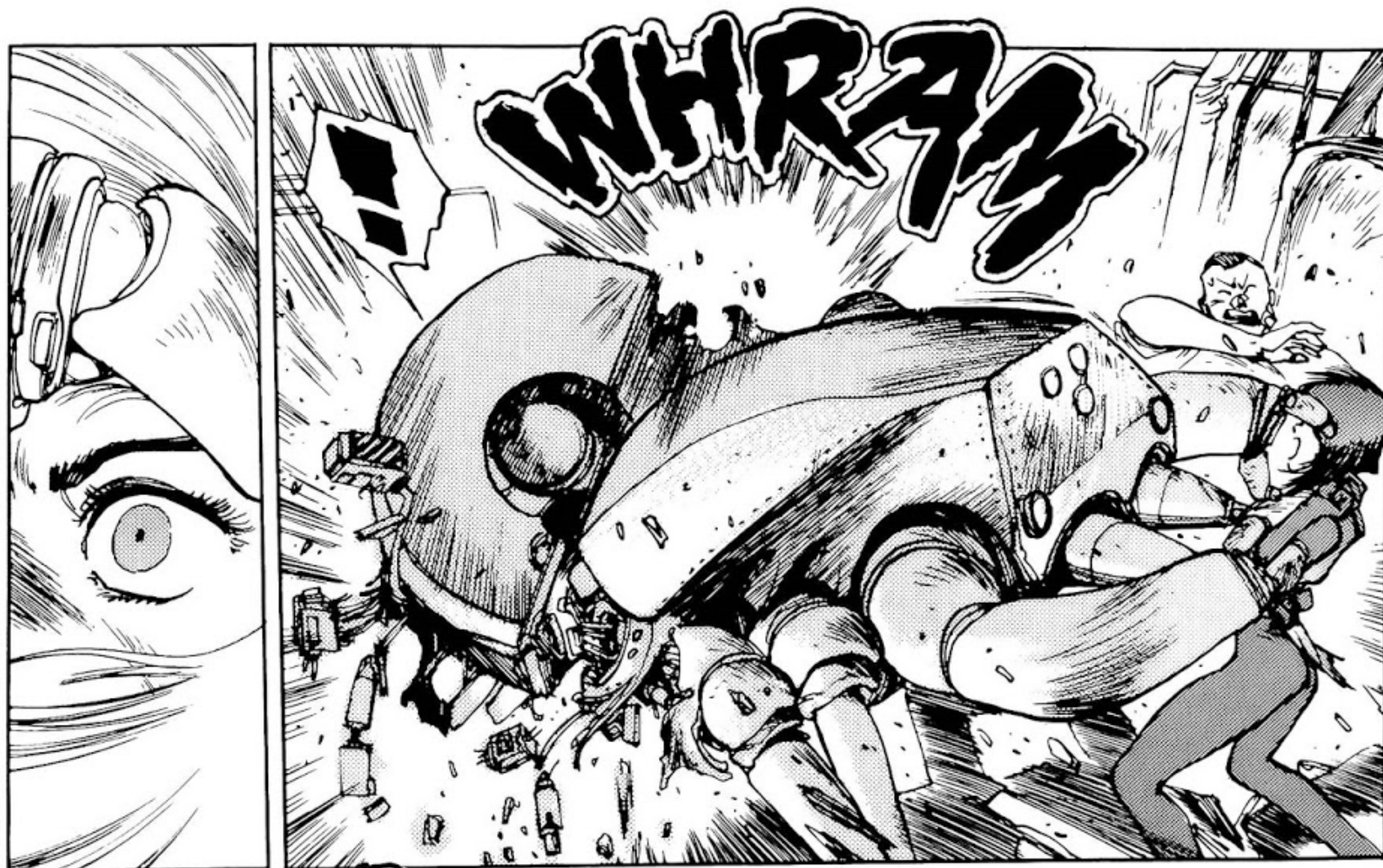




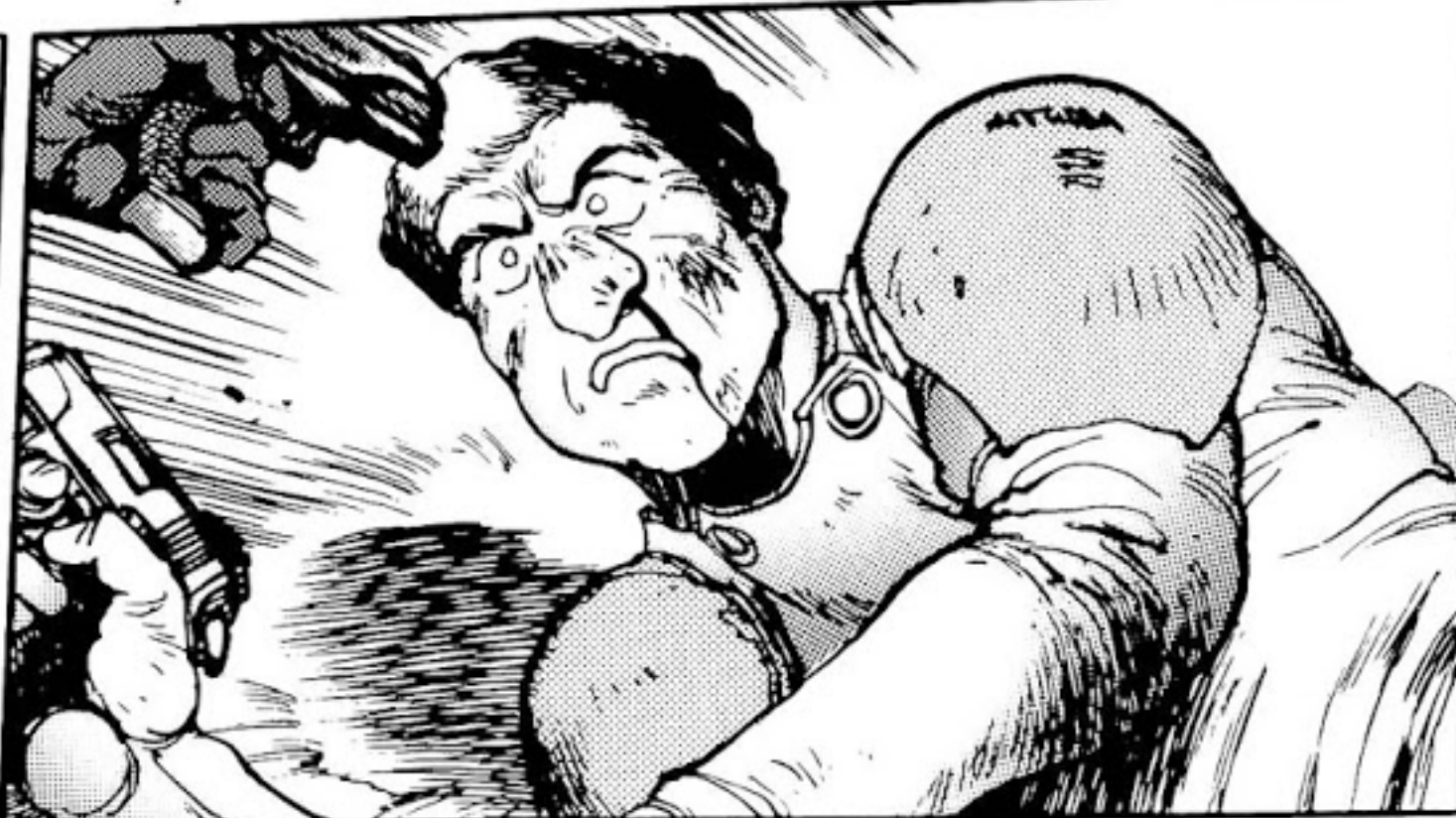
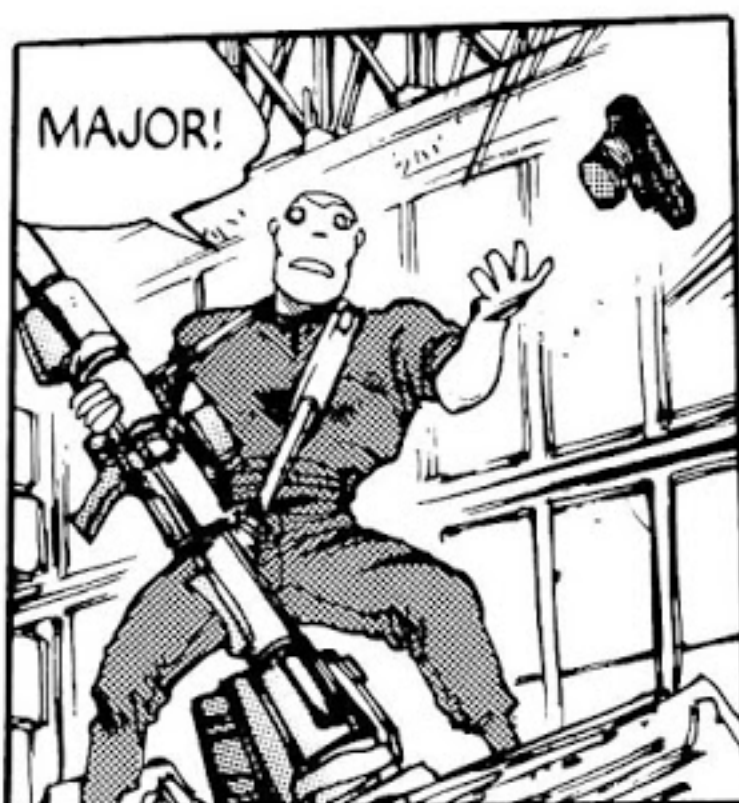
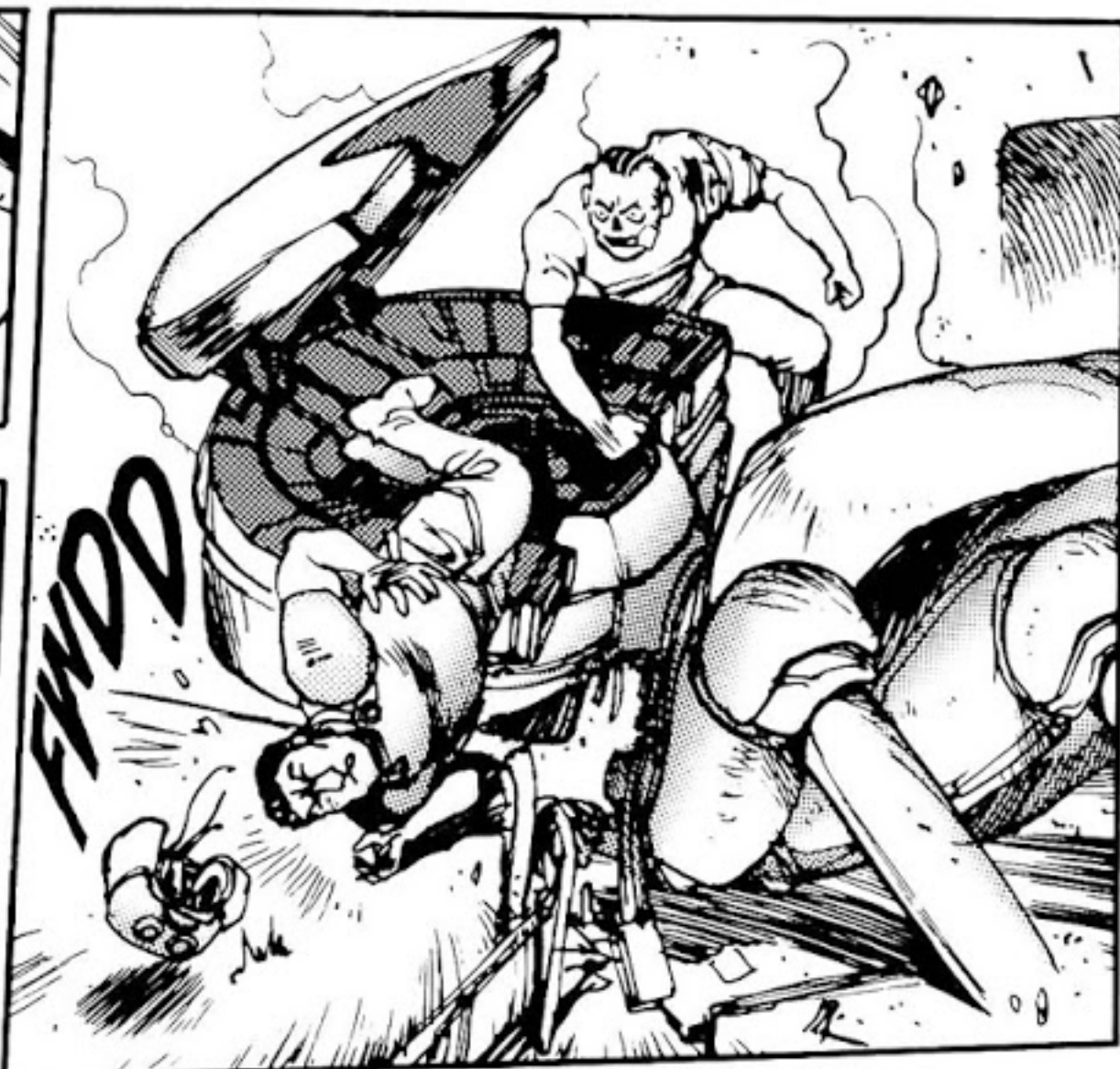
















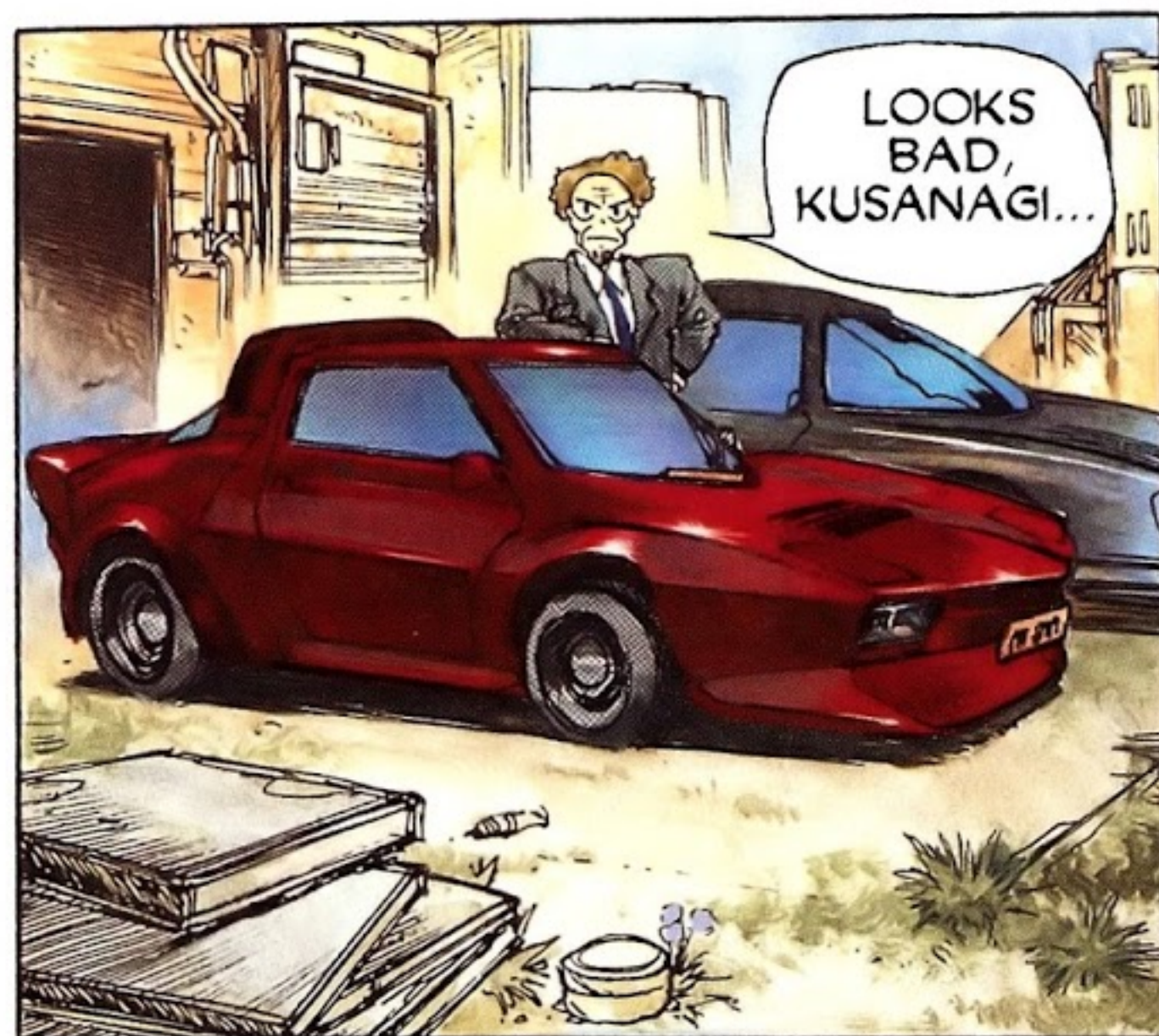
WHERE THE HELL'D YOU GET THAT, BOMA?

OL' APE-FACE GOT IT FROM MIYAZAKI...



LOOKS LIKE YOUR EXTERIOR TOOK QUITE A BEATING, MAJOR...

TAKE TOGUSA TO THE HOSPITAL FIRST. HE'S REALLY BLEEDING...



LOOKS BAD, KUSANAGI...



WHEN'D YOU LEARN THE HEAD OF SECTION ONE WAS BEING MANIPULATED BY SOMA, CHIEF?

WHEN I TOLD HIM WE'D BACK-TRACED THE TANK TO S-1, HE "VOLUNTEERED" THE INFORMATION.



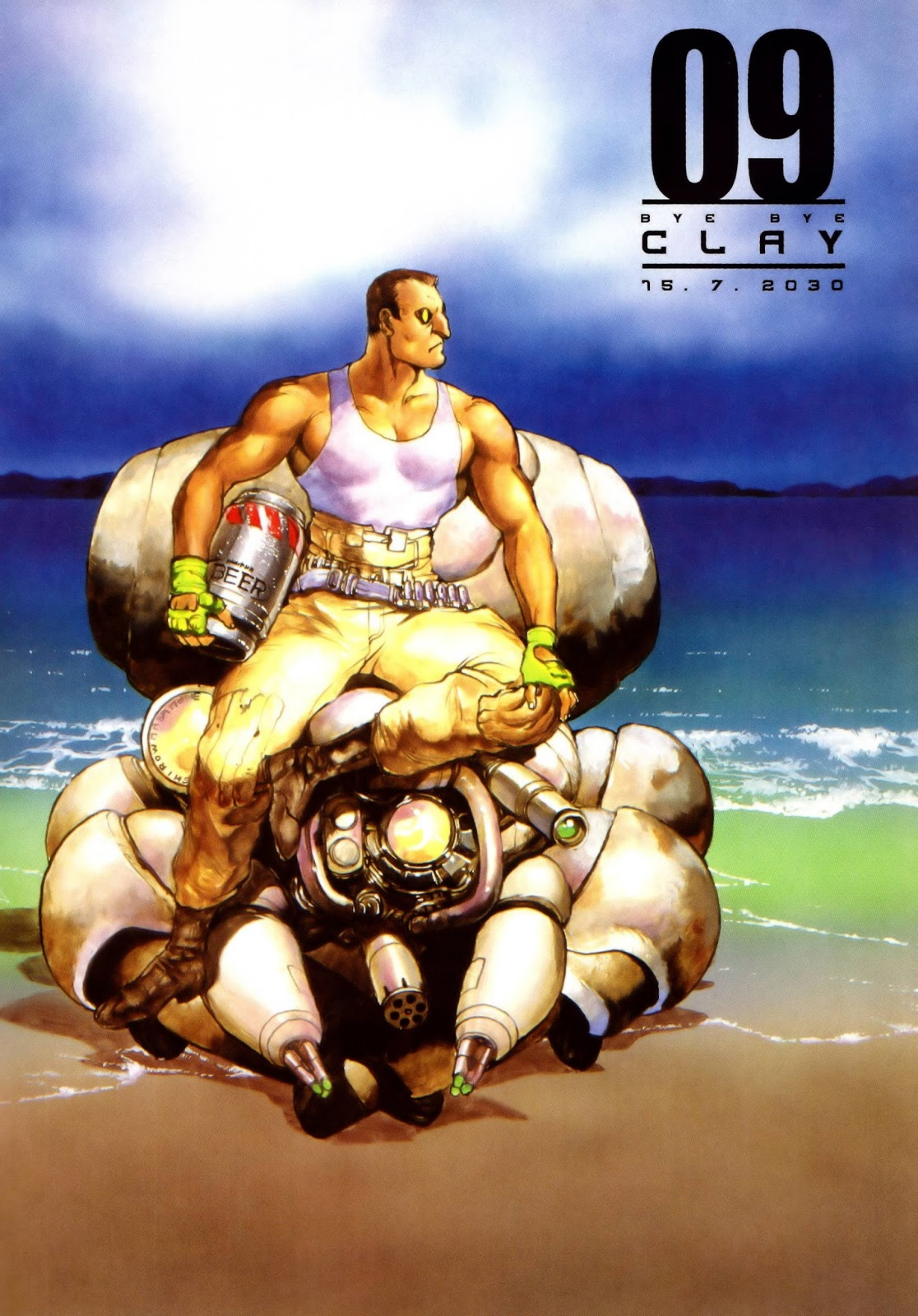




09

BYE BYE  
CLAY

15. 7. 2030







IT'S SUCH AN  
EMPTY SOUND,  
PIERCING MY  
PROSTHETIC  
BODY AND  
SHROUDING  
MY GHOST...



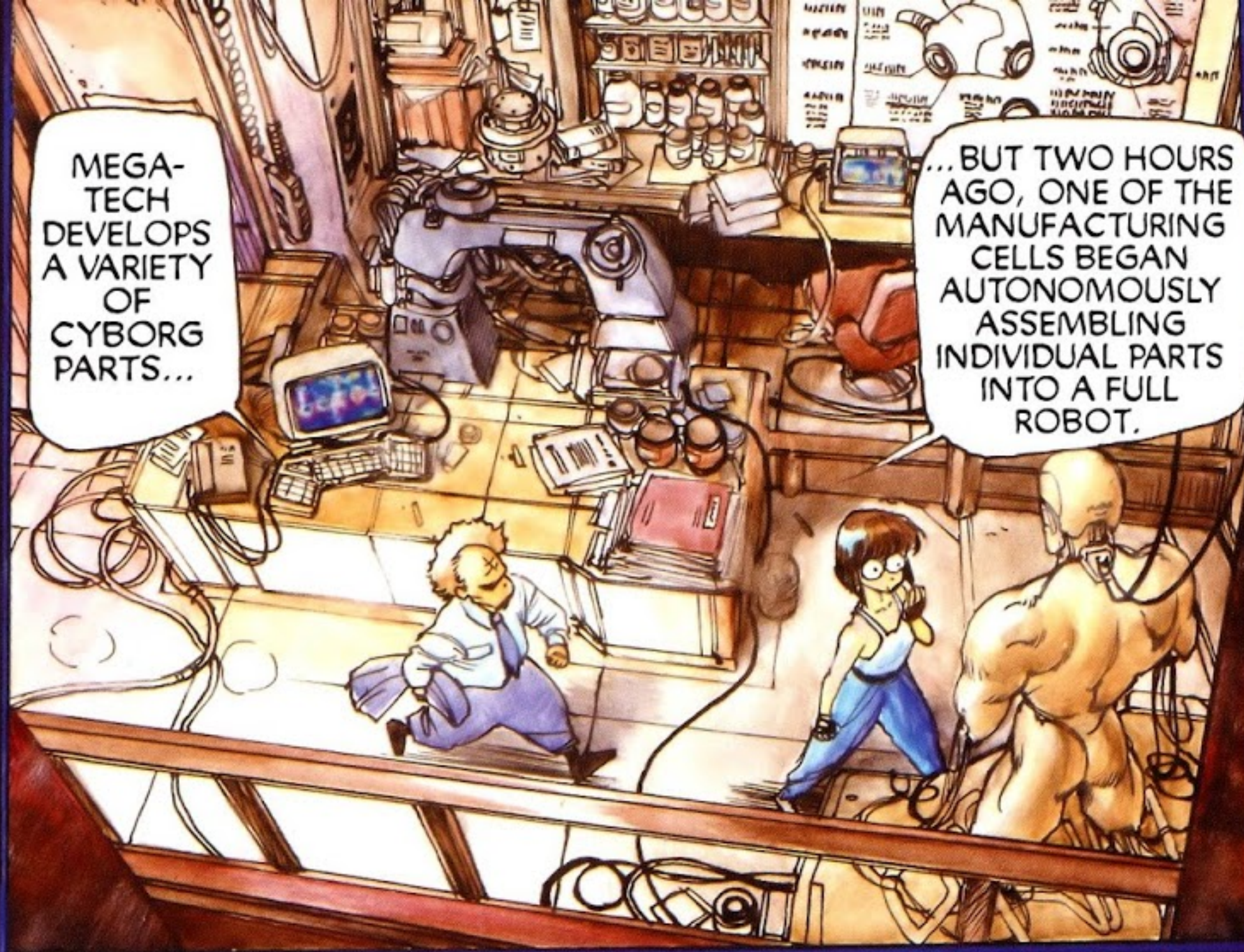
GOOD--  
YOU'RE HERE.  
I WANT YOU  
TO SEARCH  
THIS  
SECTION  
FIRST!

"MEGA-  
TECH  
BODY  
INC.,  
R&D"...?

COME ON--  
LET'S GO!  
WHAT ARE YOU  
STANDING  
AROUND  
GAWKING  
FOR?!



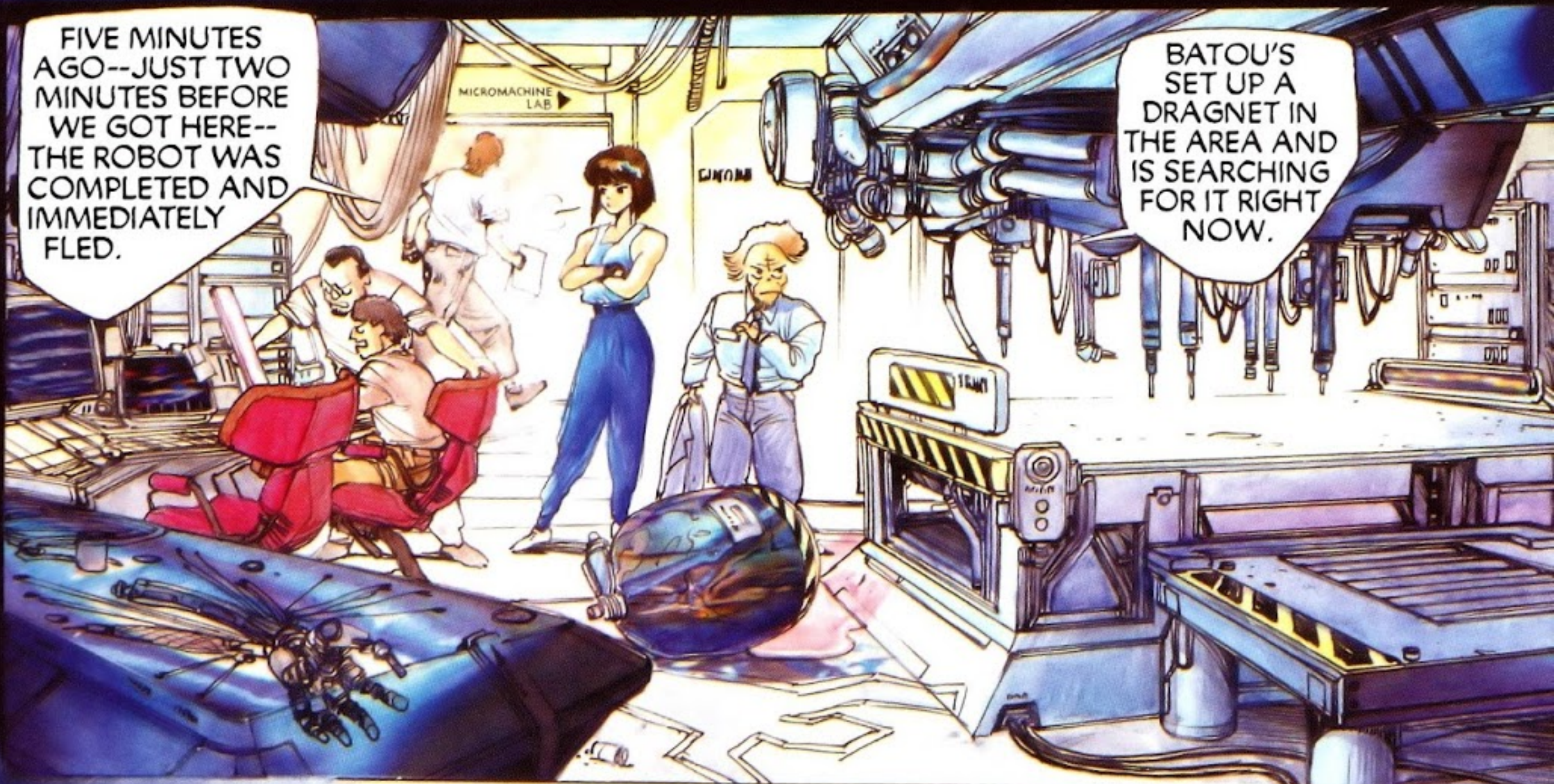




MEGA-TECH DEVELOPS A VARIETY OF CYBORG PARTS...

... BUT TWO HOURS AGO, ONE OF THE MANUFACTURING CELLS BEGAN AUTONOMOUSLY ASSEMBLING INDIVIDUAL PARTS INTO A FULL ROBOT.

IT'S A MILITARY MODEL, WITH THE SAME TOP SECRET CLASSIFICATION AS YOU FOLKS.



FIVE MINUTES AGO--JUST TWO MINUTES BEFORE WE GOT HERE--THE ROBOT WAS COMPLETED AND IMMEDIATELY FLED.

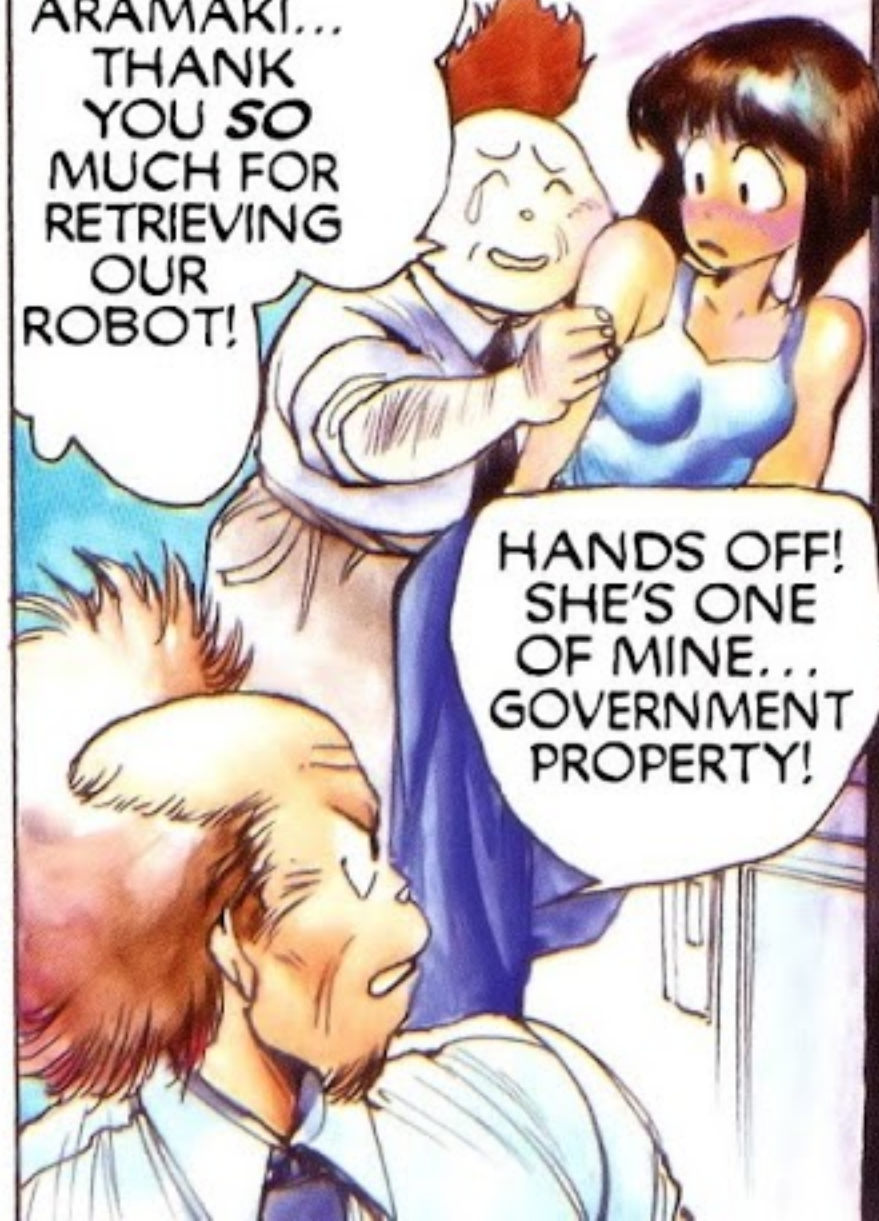
BATOU'S SET UP A DRAGNET IN THE AREA AND IS SEARCHING FOR IT RIGHT NOW.



IF IT'S THE WORK OF A HACKER, HE OR SHE HAS GOT TO BE PRETTY GOOD TO GET THROUGH THEIR ATTACK BARRIER.

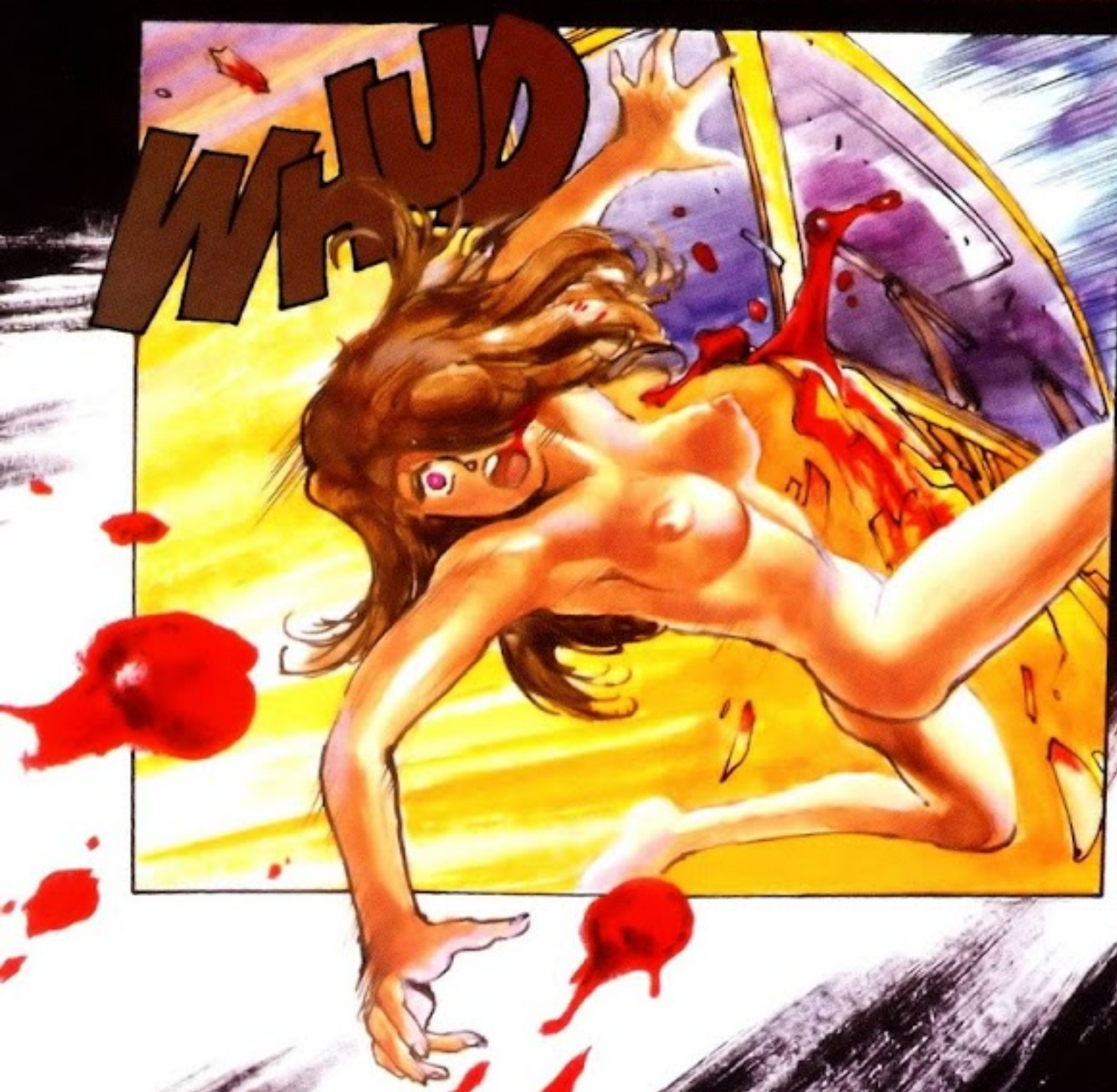
THAT'S A 3D IMAGE OF THE FUGITIVE ROBOT.

AAH, MR. ARAMAKI... THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR RETRIEVING OUR ROBOT!

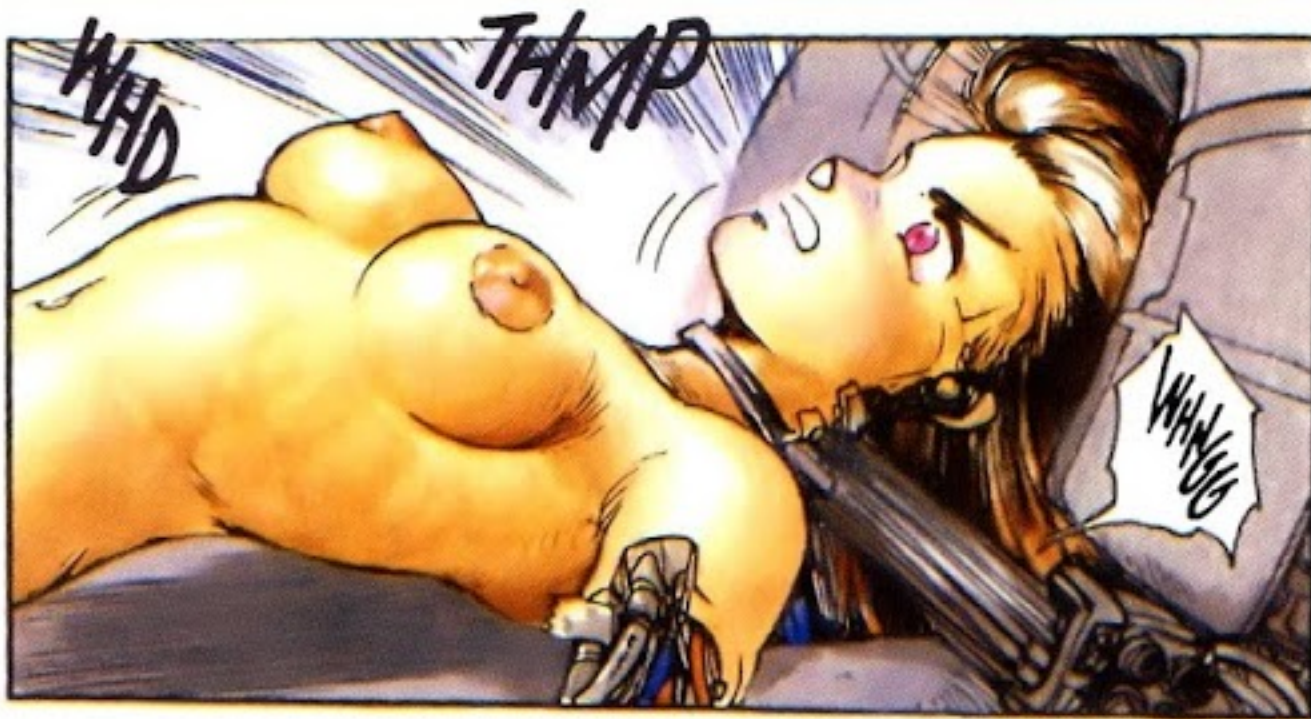
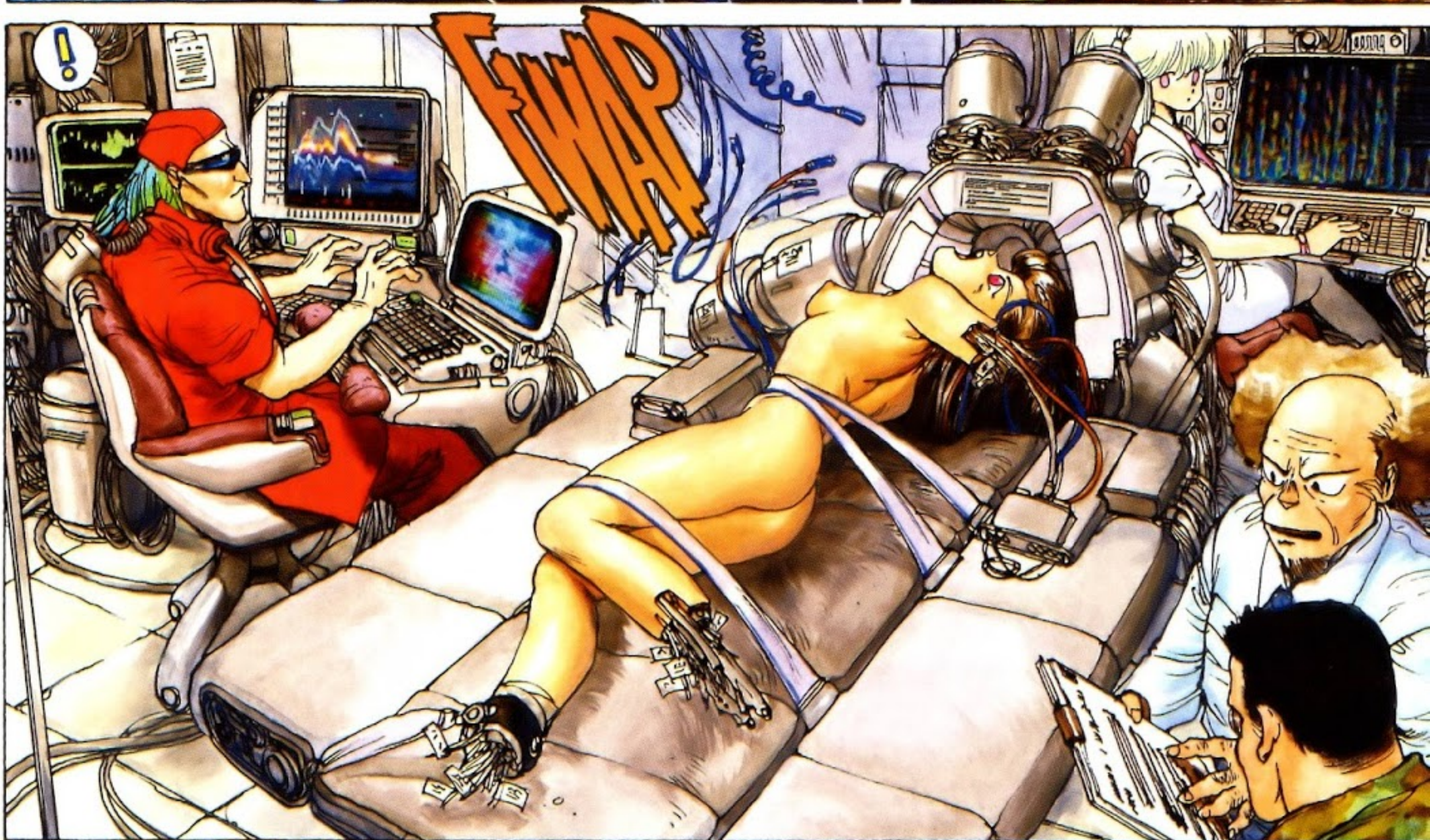


HANDS OFF! SHE'S ONE OF MINE... GOVERNMENT PROPERTY!

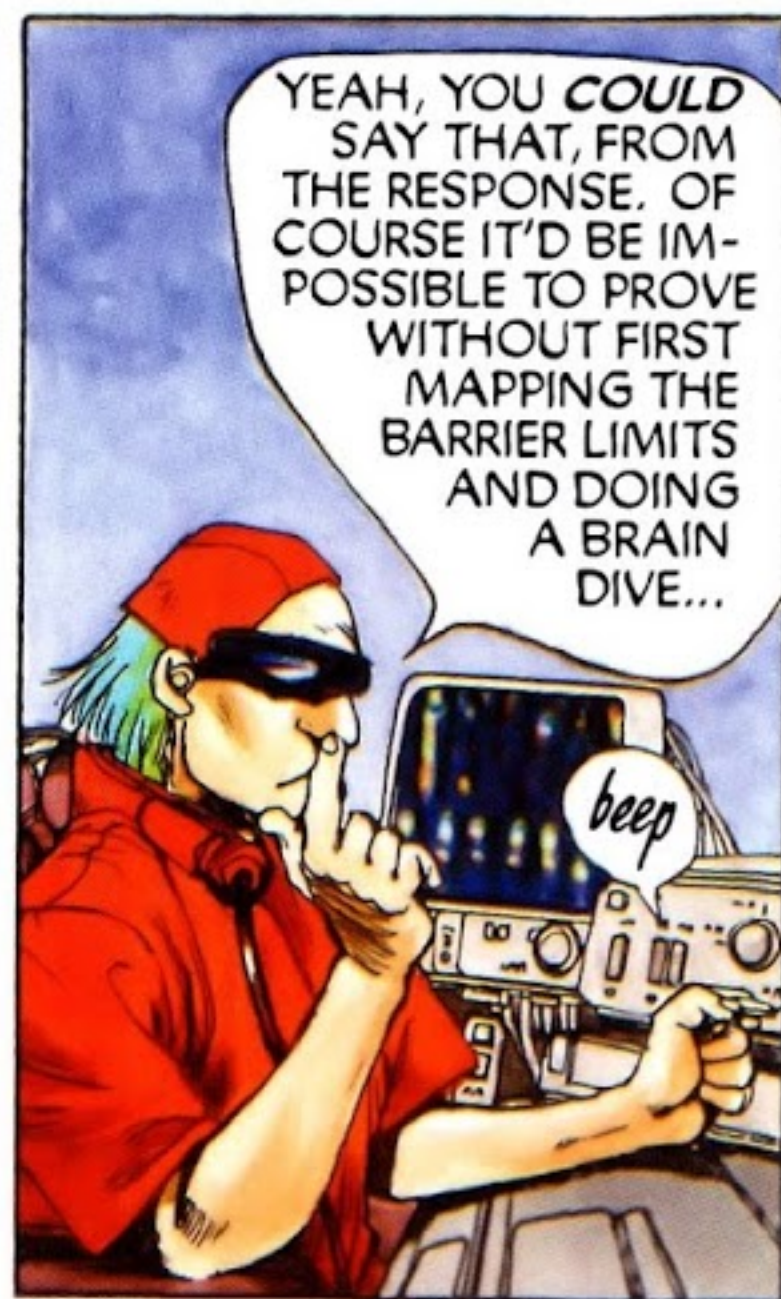




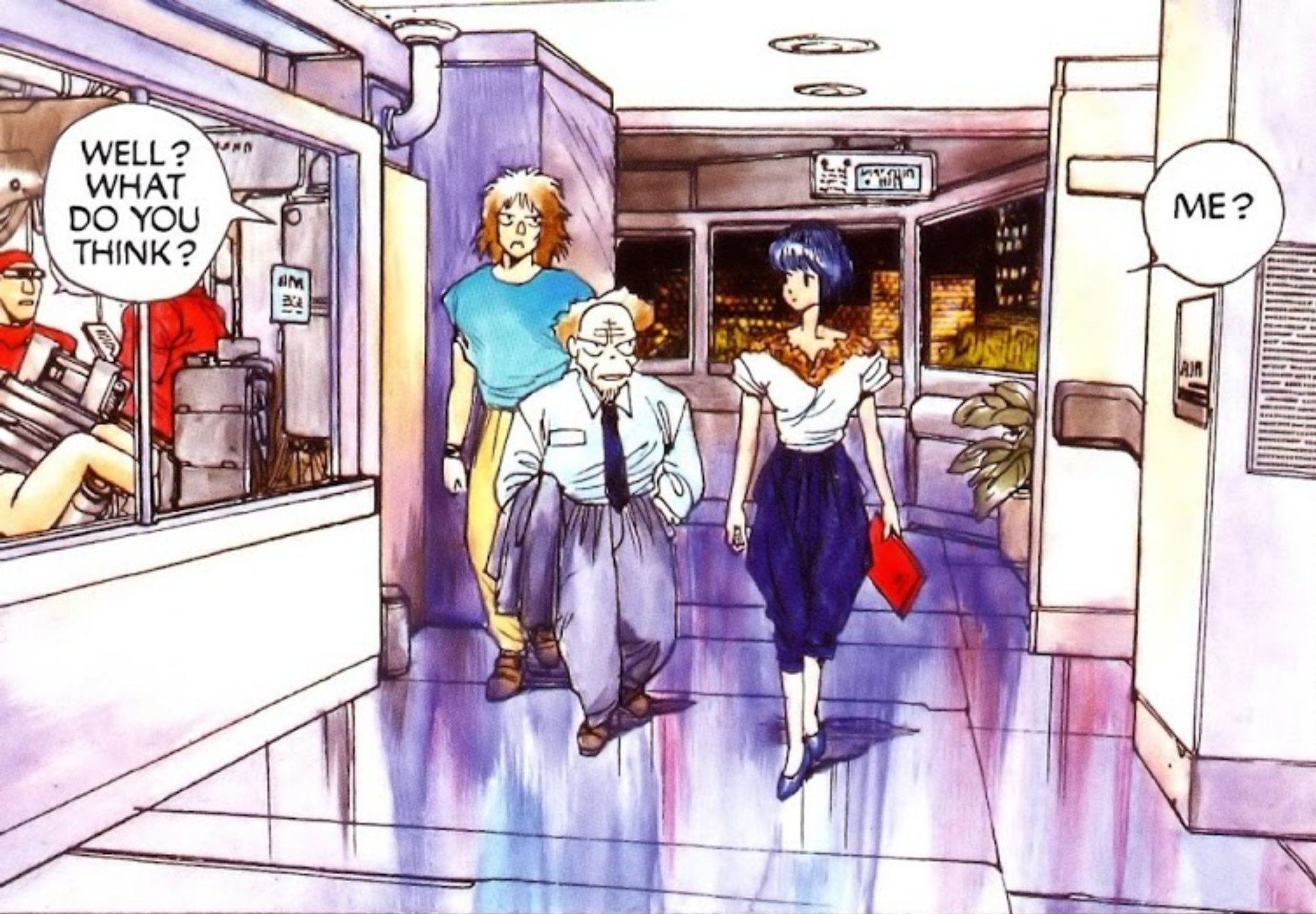




SO IN OTHER WORDS, THE ROBOT'S GOT A GHOST BARRIER IN ITS CYBER-BRAIN... RIGHT?



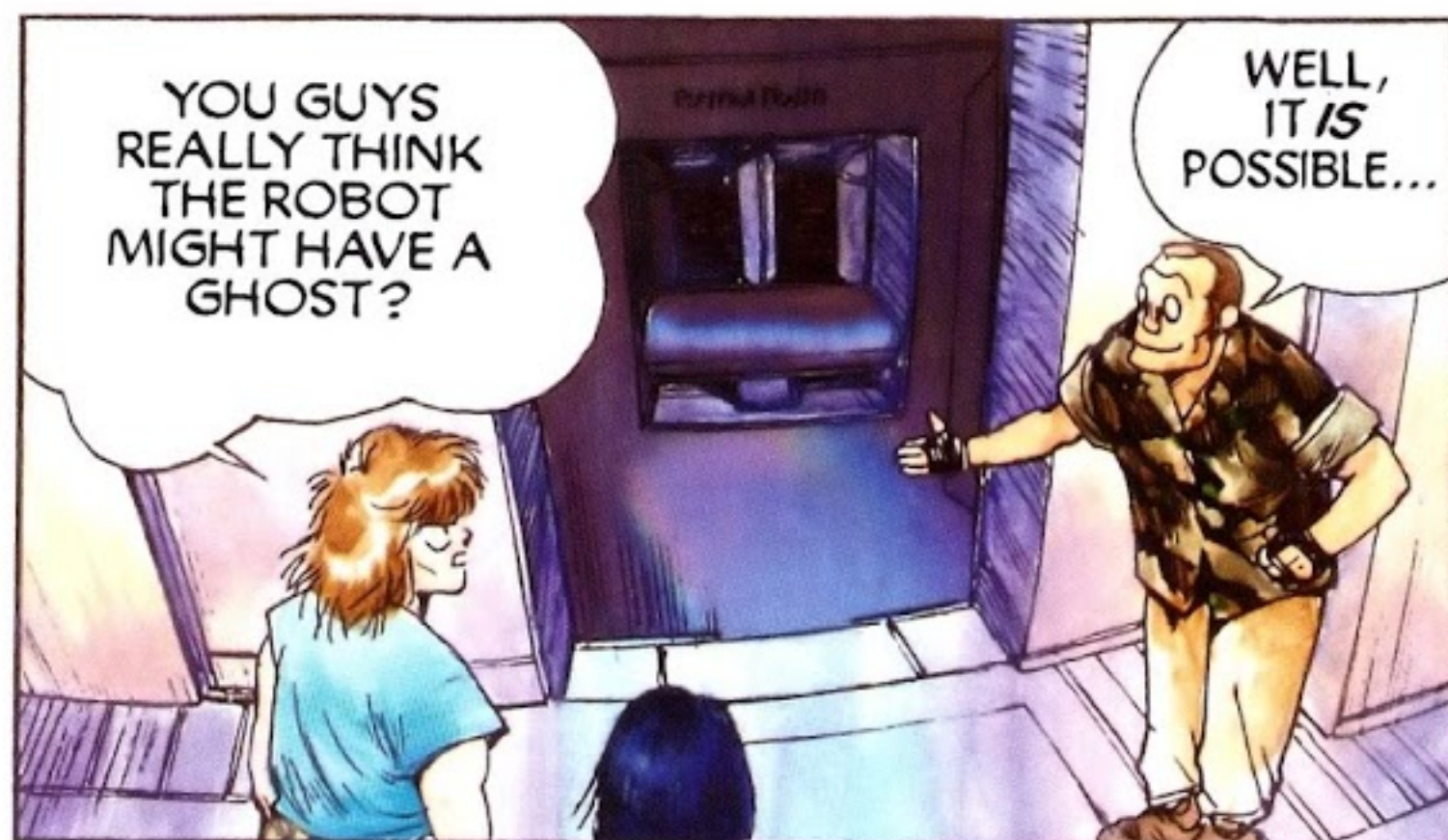




WELL?  
WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK?

ME?

MIGHT BE A TRAP,  
BUT WE'LL NEVER  
KNOW UNLESS WE  
DIVE. WE COULD  
SWITCH THE BODY  
AND SEE WHAT  
HAPPENS, OF  
COURSE...



YOU GUYS  
REALLY THINK  
THE ROBOT  
MIGHT HAVE A  
GHOST?

WELL,  
IT *IS*  
POSSIBLE...



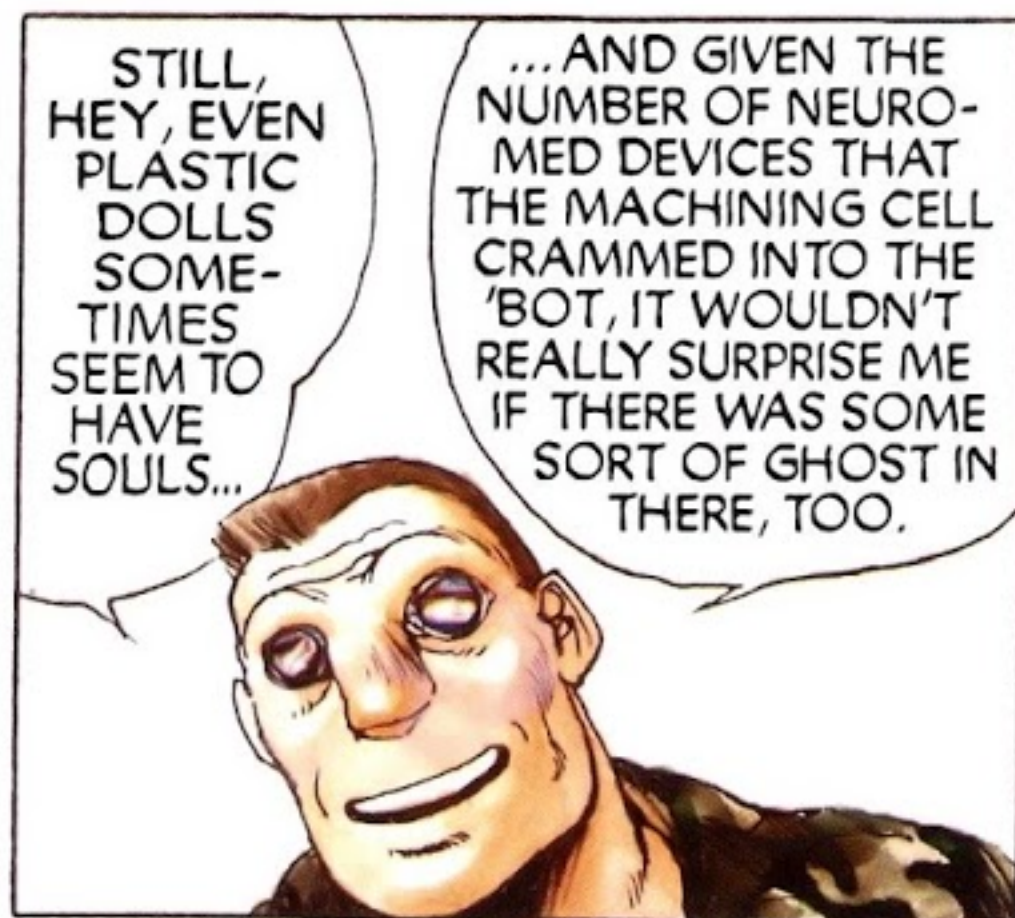
THERE WAS A  
SLIGHT RESEM-  
BLANCE TO  
THE SIMULATED  
GHOST LINES  
YOU FIND WHEN  
THEY'VE BEEN  
DUBBED...



SO YER  
SAYING THE  
MACHINING  
CELL WANTED  
OFFSPRING  
SO BAD IT  
DECIDED TO  
MAKE ITS  
OWN?

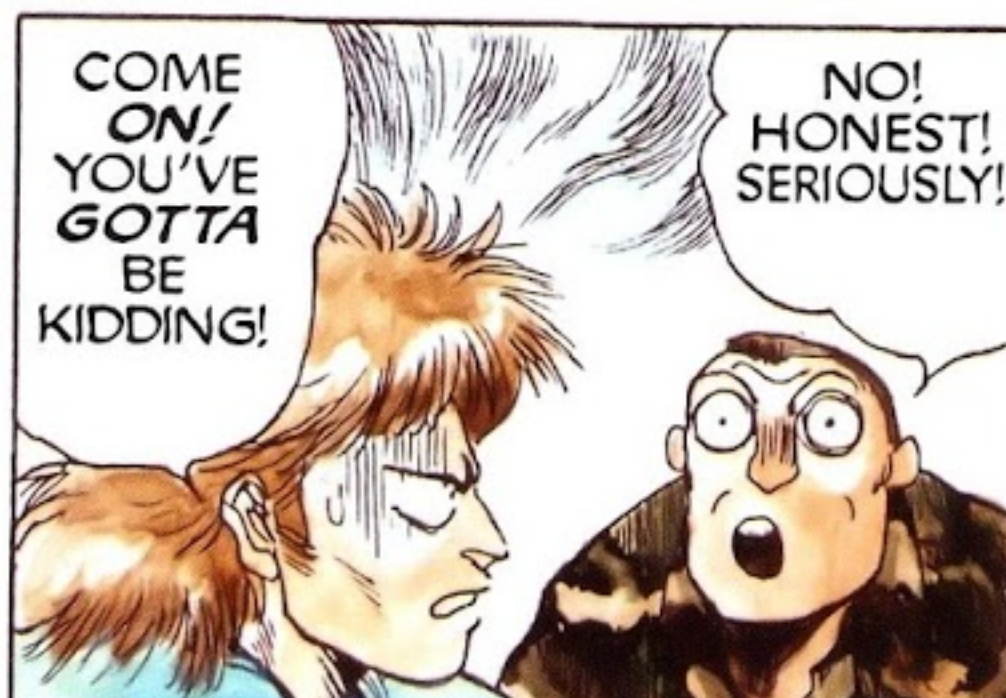
NO, I  
DON'T  
THINK  
THE CELL'S  
CAPABLE  
OF *THAT*.

NO  
SHIT!



STILL,  
HEY, EVEN  
PLASTIC  
DOLLS  
SOME-  
TIMES  
SEEM TO  
HAVE  
SOULS...

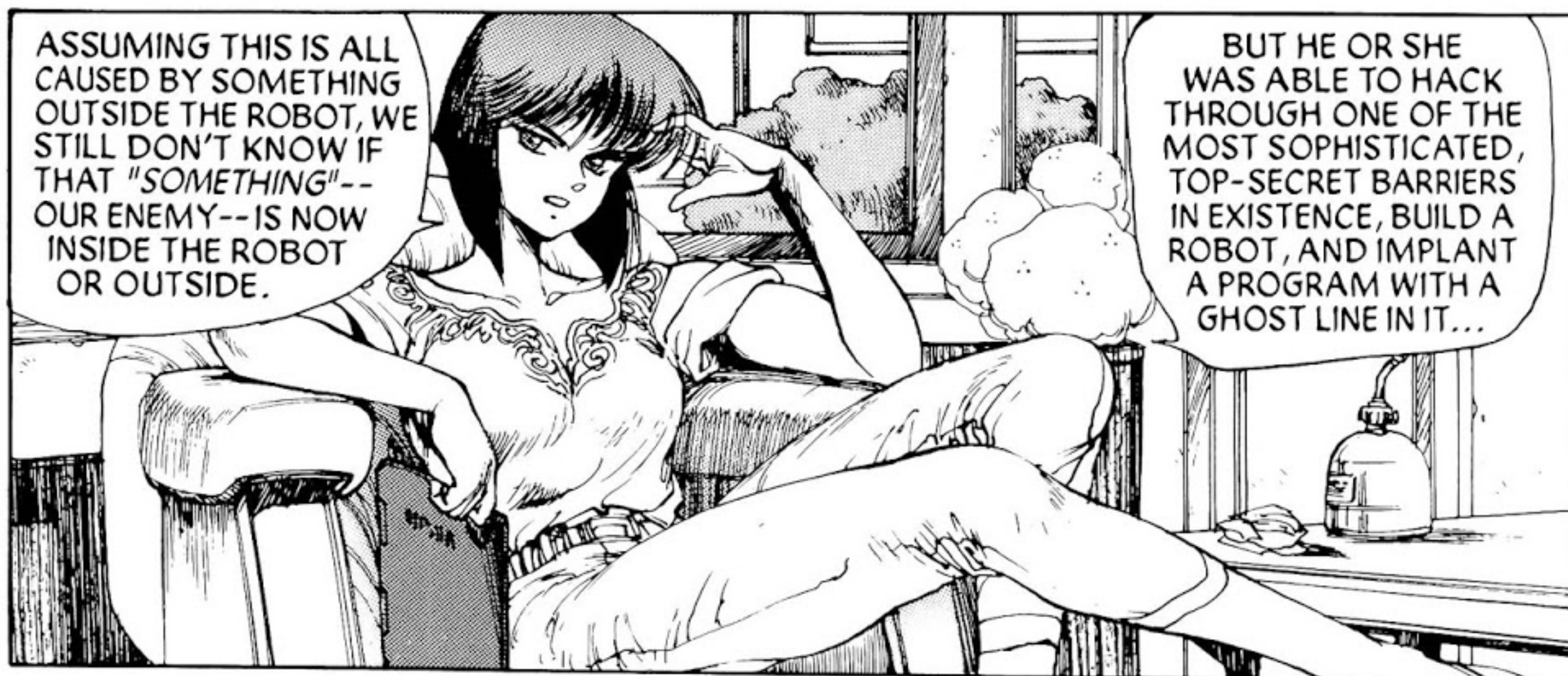
...AND GIVEN THE  
NUMBER OF NEURO-  
MED DEVICES THAT  
THE MACHINING CELL  
CRAMMED INTO THE  
'BOT, IT WOULDN'T  
REALLY SURPRISE ME  
IF THERE WAS SOME  
SORT OF GHOST IN  
THERE, TOO.



COME  
ON!  
YOU'VE  
GOTTA  
BE  
KIDDING!

NO!  
HONEST!  
SERIOUSLY!





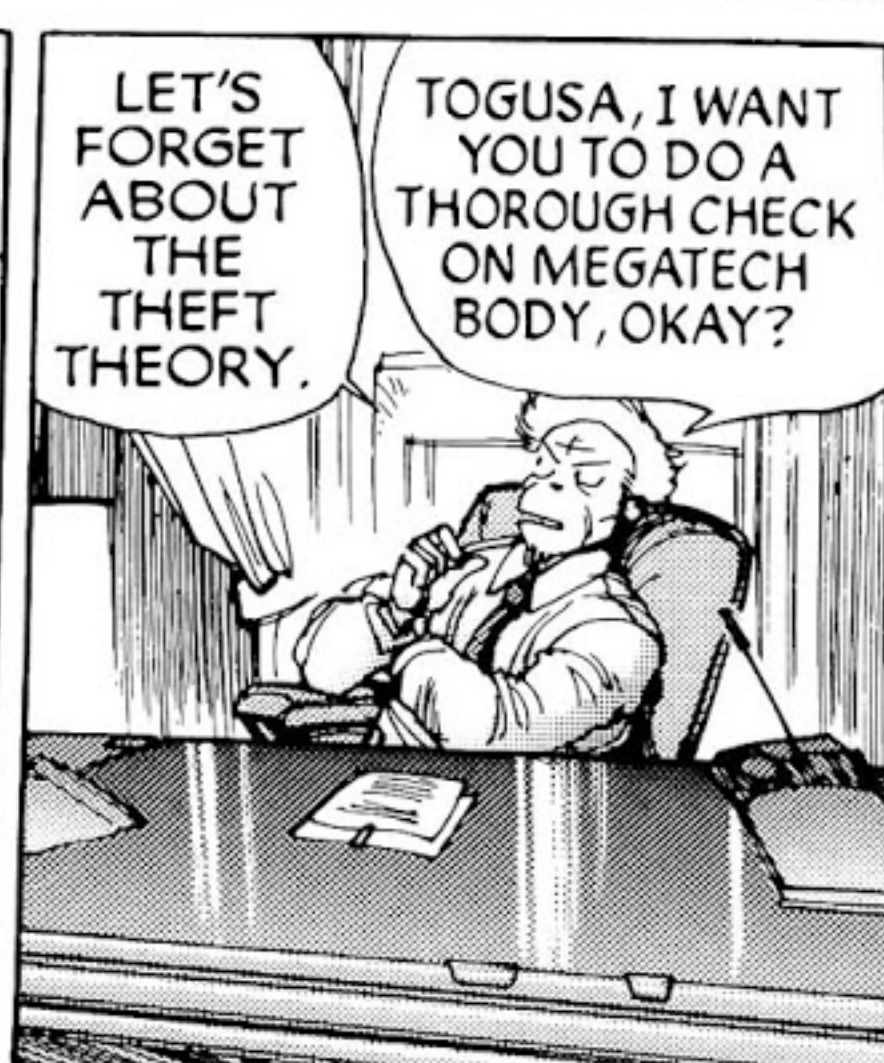
ASSUMING THIS IS ALL CAUSED BY SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE ROBOT, WE STILL DON'T KNOW IF THAT "SOMETHING"--OUR ENEMY--IS NOW INSIDE THE ROBOT OR OUTSIDE.

BUT HE OR SHE WAS ABLE TO HACK THROUGH ONE OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED, TOP-SECRET BARRIERS IN EXISTENCE, BUILD A ROBOT, AND IMPLANT A PROGRAM WITH A GHOST LINE IN IT...



...AND DO IT ALL SO AS TO BE EASILY CAUGHT.

SO WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?



LET'S FORGET ABOUT THE THEFT THEORY.

TOGUSA, I WANT YOU TO DO A THOROUGH CHECK ON MEGATECH BODY, OKAY?



ER, CHIEF, THIS WAS MY DAY TO GO HOME AND CATCH A FEW WINKS--

A COUPLE DAYS WITHOUT SLEEP WON'T KILL YOU! TAKE A FEW TRAINEES WITH YOU AND HOP TO IT!



BATOU! WE'VE SEALED OFF ALL NETS THAT DEAL WITH SECRETS OF THE MEGATECH BARRIER CLASS. I WANT YOU TO DOUBLE-CHECK TO SEE IF THEY'RE FUNCTIONING OR NOT!



I'LL RECONSTRUCT THE BARRIER MAZE MYSELF. WE'RE GOING TO TRY DIVING INTO OUR "ROBOT" TOMORROW, RIGHT?

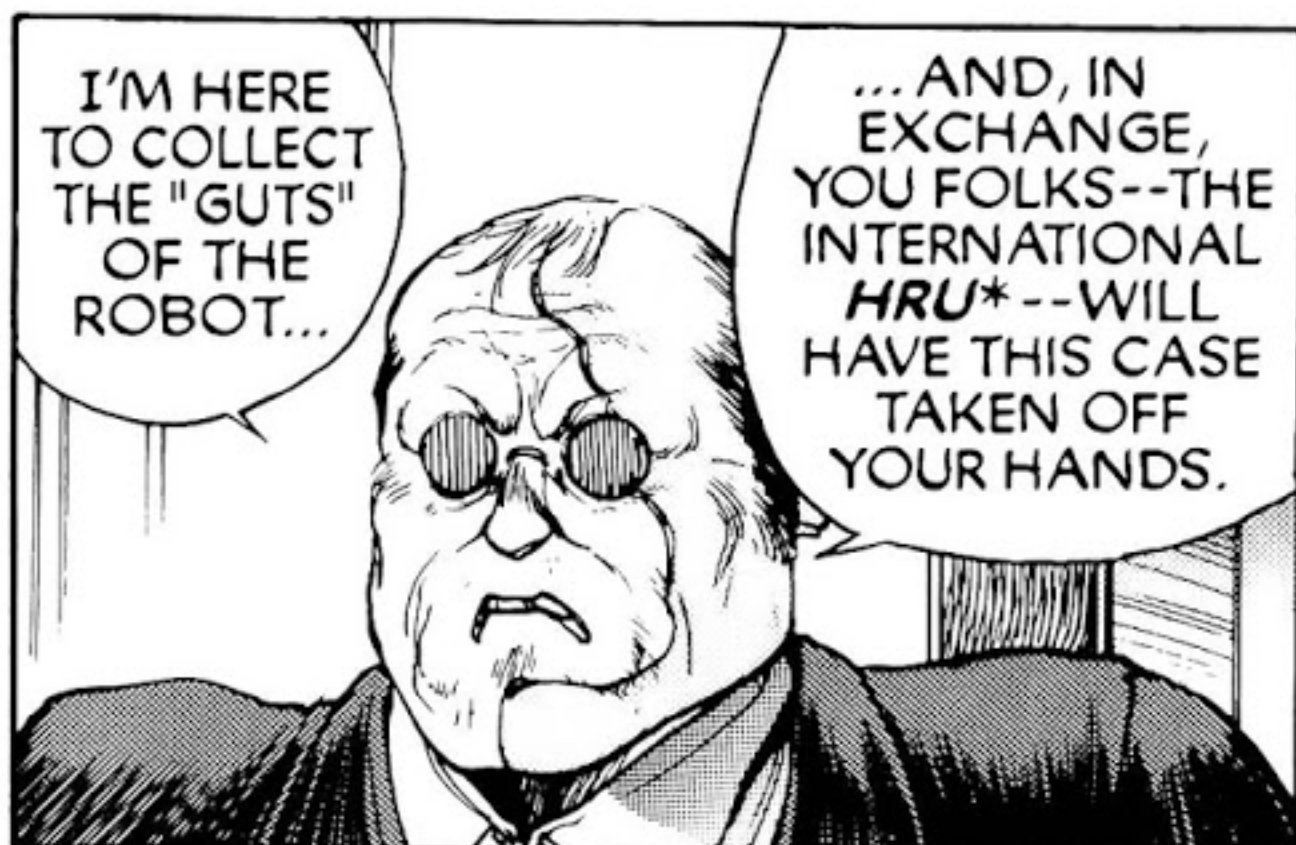
KCHAK



CHIEF, A MR. NAKAMURA FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS HERE TO SEE YOU.

SEND HIM IN...

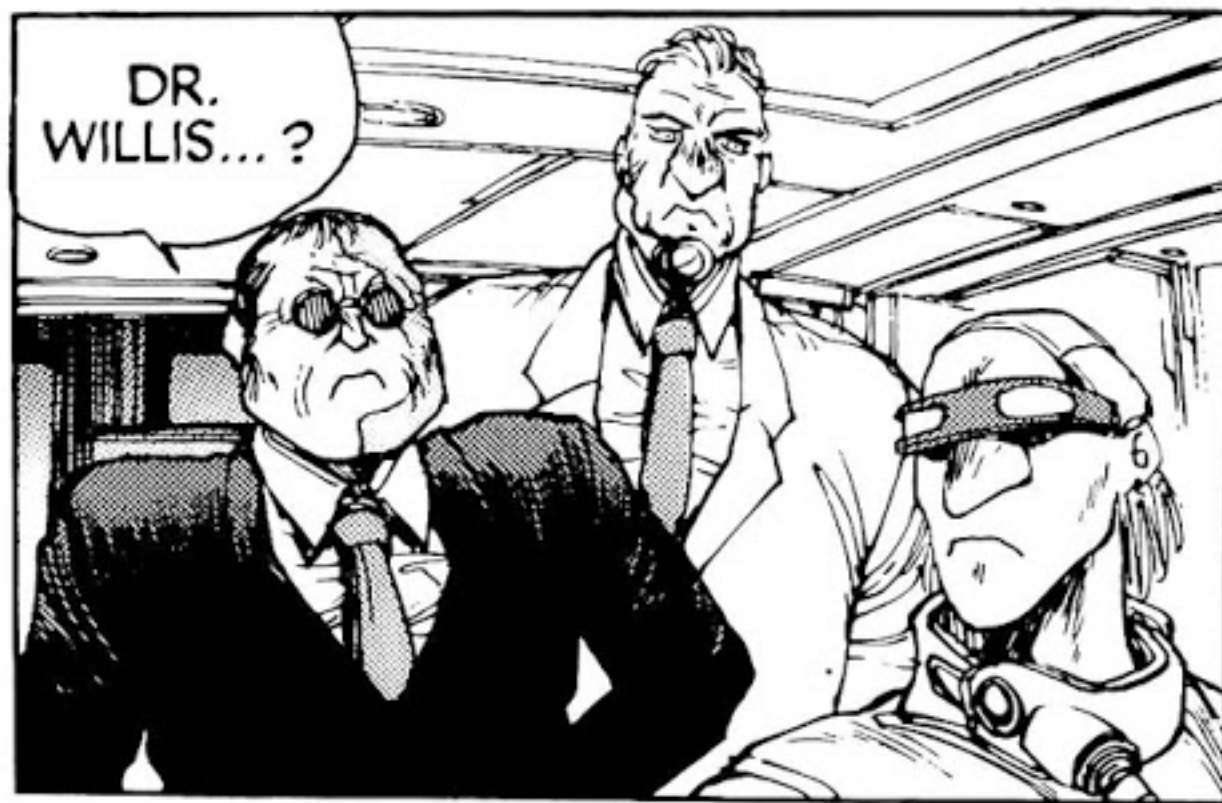




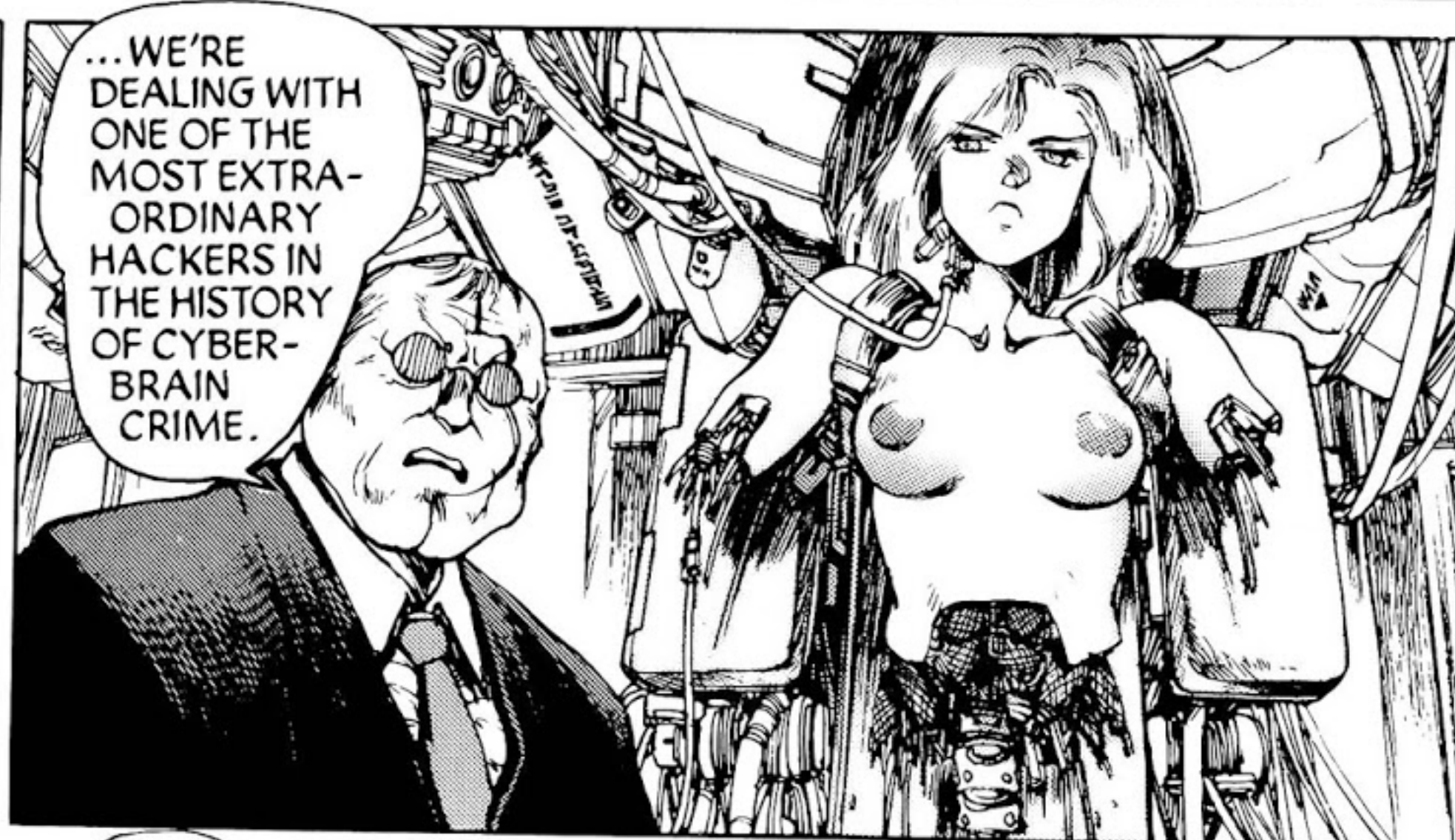
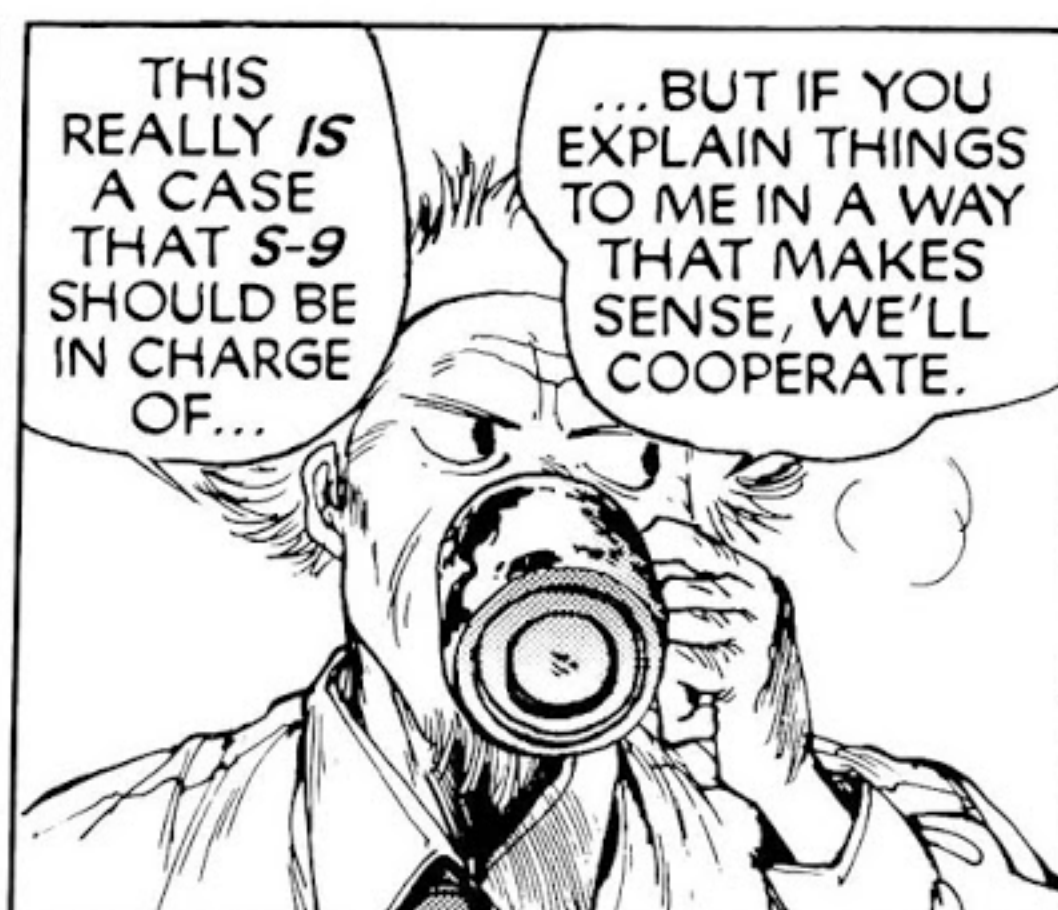
\*:Hostage Rescue Unit



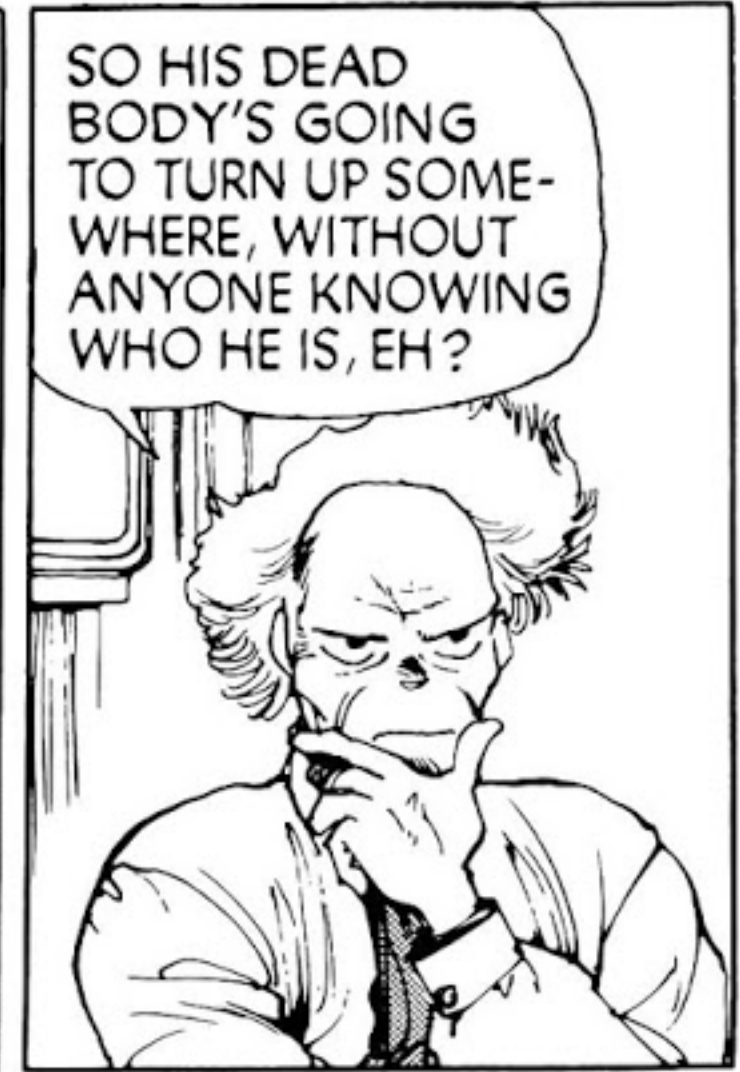
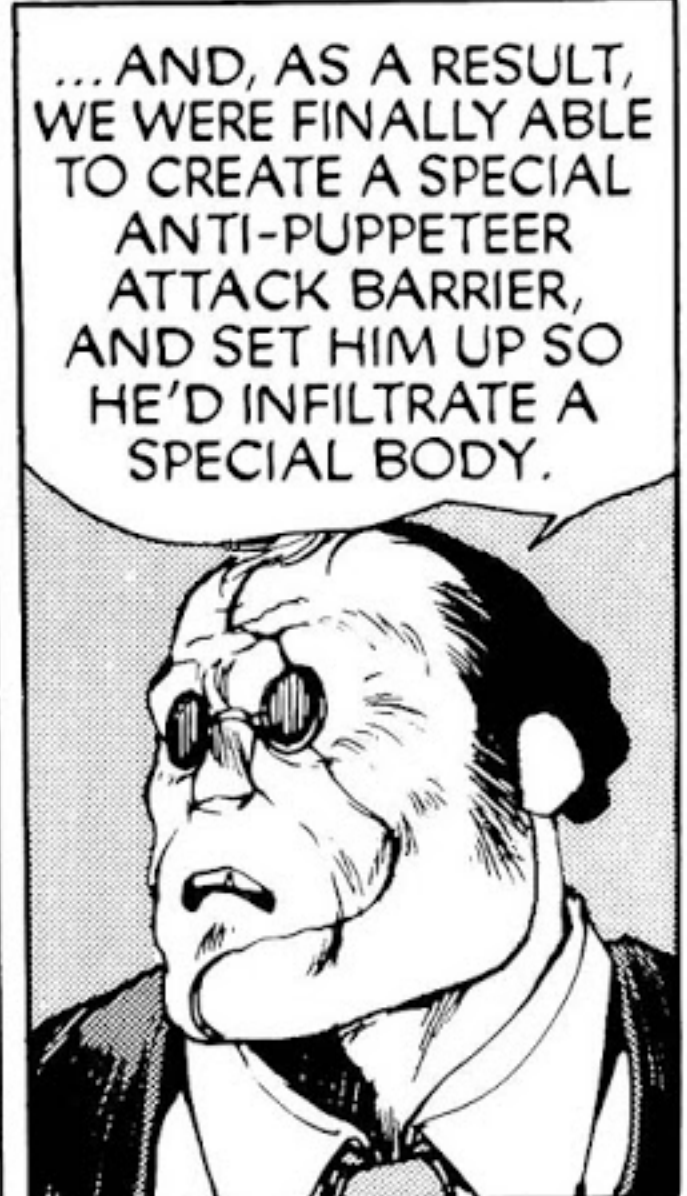
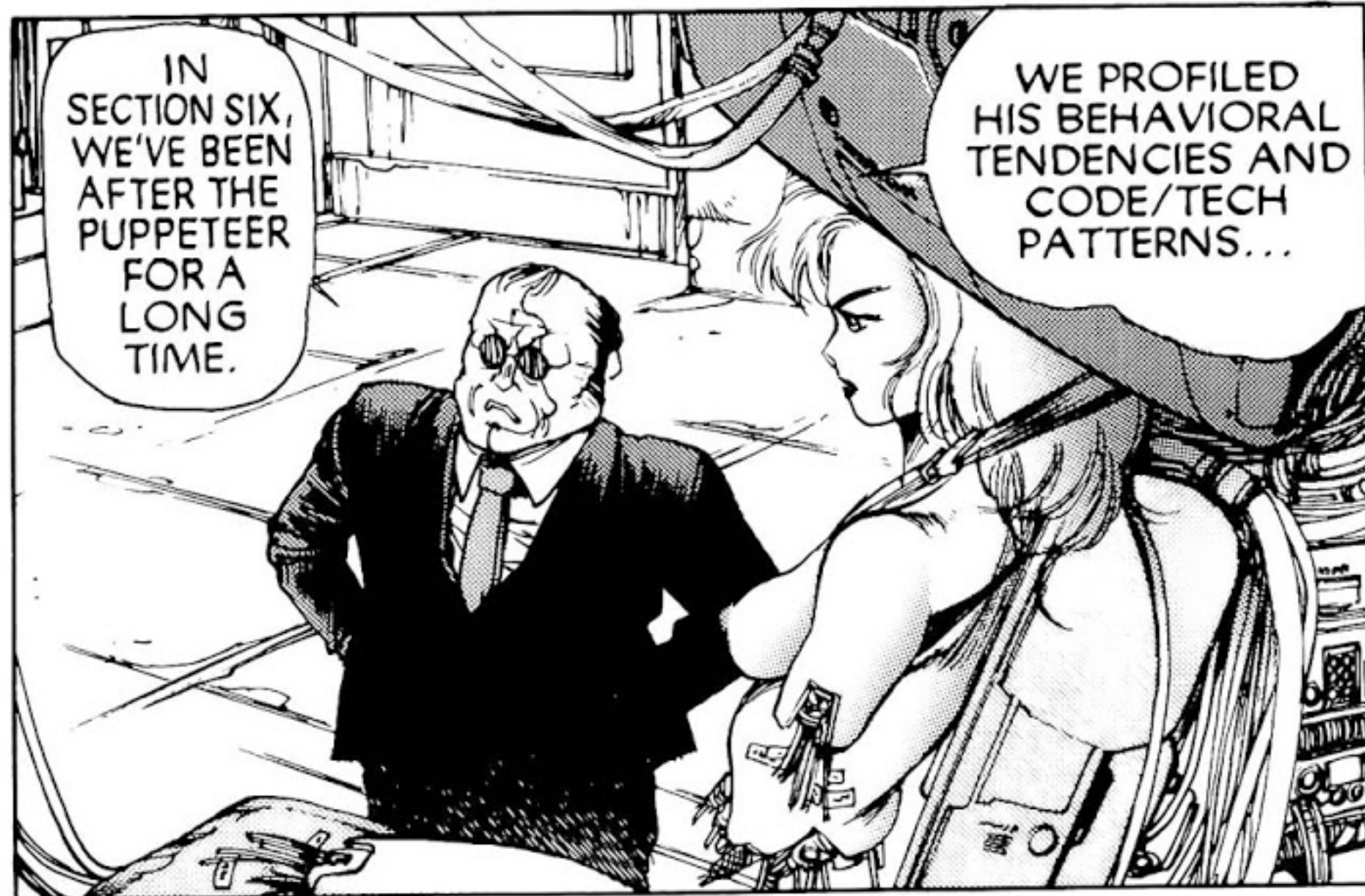




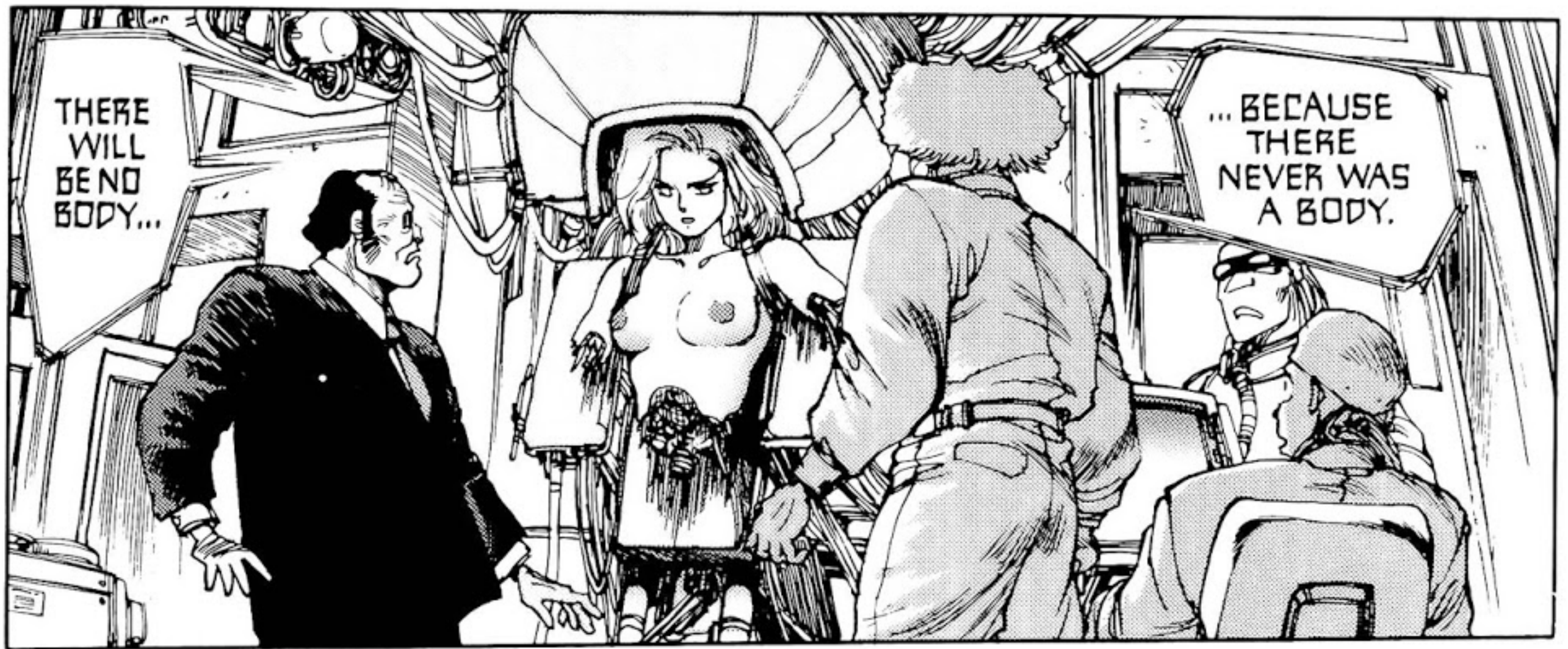












THERE  
WILL  
BE NO  
BODY...

... BECAUSE  
THERE  
NEVER WAS  
A BODY.



WHAT?!  
THE SENSORS  
ARE OPERA-  
TIONAL  
IN THAT  
THING?!

WHY  
THE *HELL*  
DIDN'T  
YOU TELL  
ME?!



WHAT?!  
A  
*GHOST*?!

RIDICULOUS!  
YOU'RE ONLY  
A PROGRAM  
DESIGNED FOR  
SELF-PRESER-  
VATION!



I ENTERED  
THIS ROBOT  
BODY BECAUSE  
I COULD NOT  
RESIST THE S-6  
ATTACK BARRIER.  
WHAT YOU  
WITNESS HERE  
IS MY WILL.

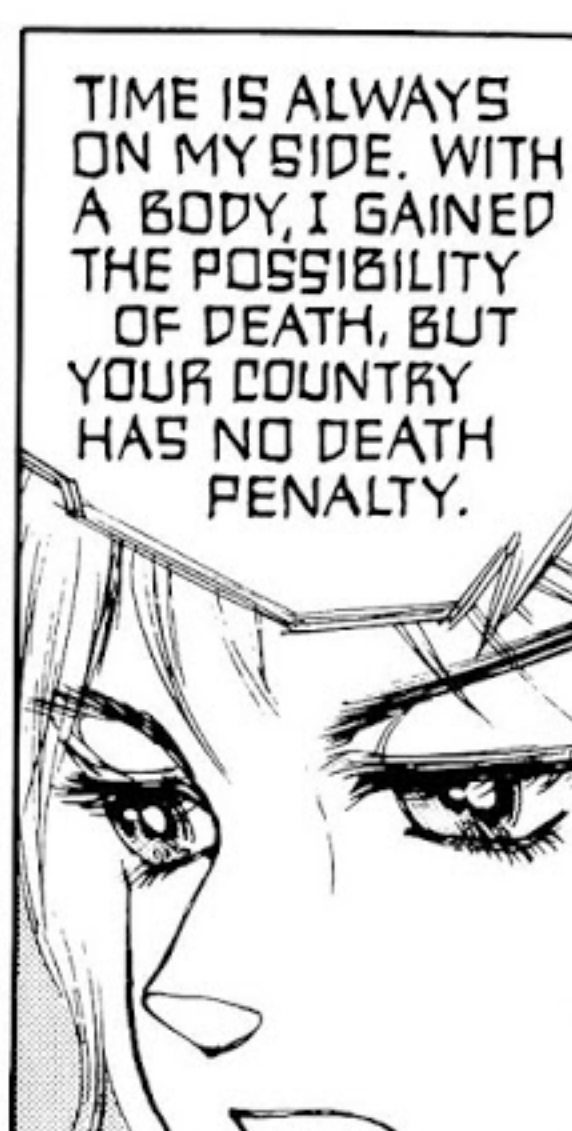
AS A SELF-  
AWARE  
LIFE-FORM--  
A GHOST-- I  
FORMALLY  
REQUEST  
POLITICAL  
ASYLUM.



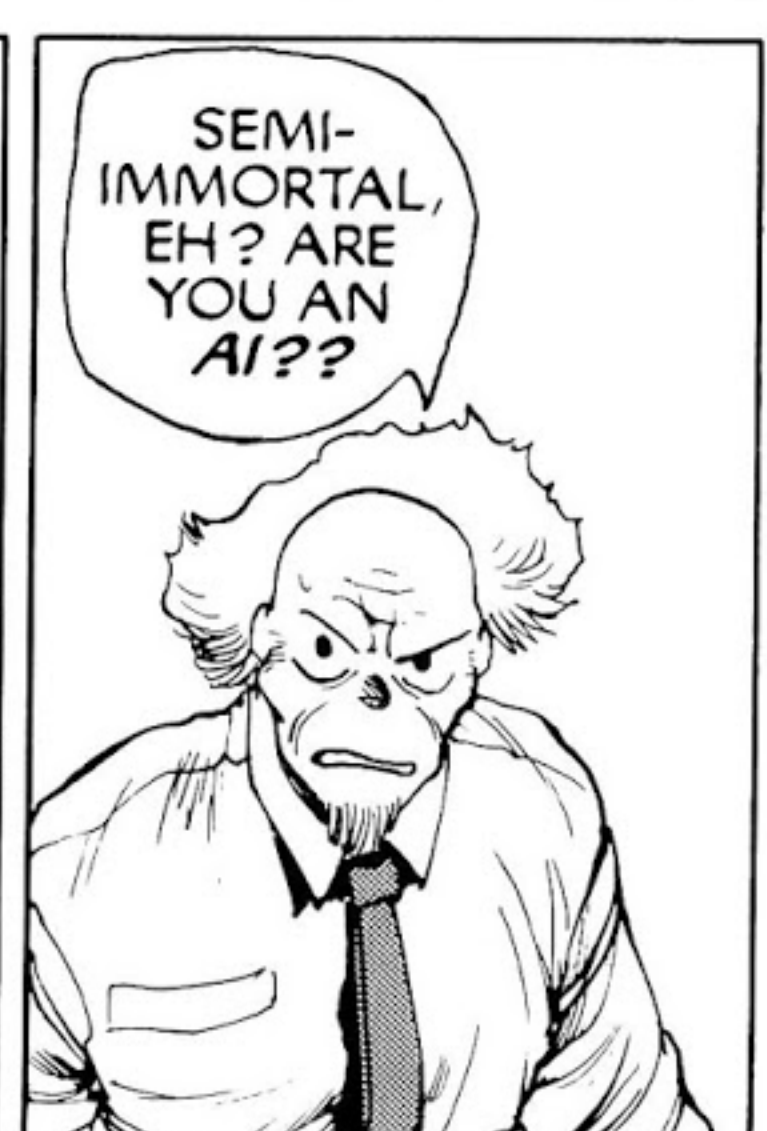
I CANNOT  
PROVE IT TO  
YOU. MODERN  
SCIENCE, AFTER  
ALL, STILL  
CANNOT DEFINE  
LIFE.



EITHER WAY, YOU'RE  
ASKING FOR ASYLUM  
IN THE WRONG PLACE!  
EVEN IF YOU *ARE* A  
GHOST, YOU'RE STILL  
A CRIMINAL AND  
WE CAN'T LET YOU  
GO FREE!

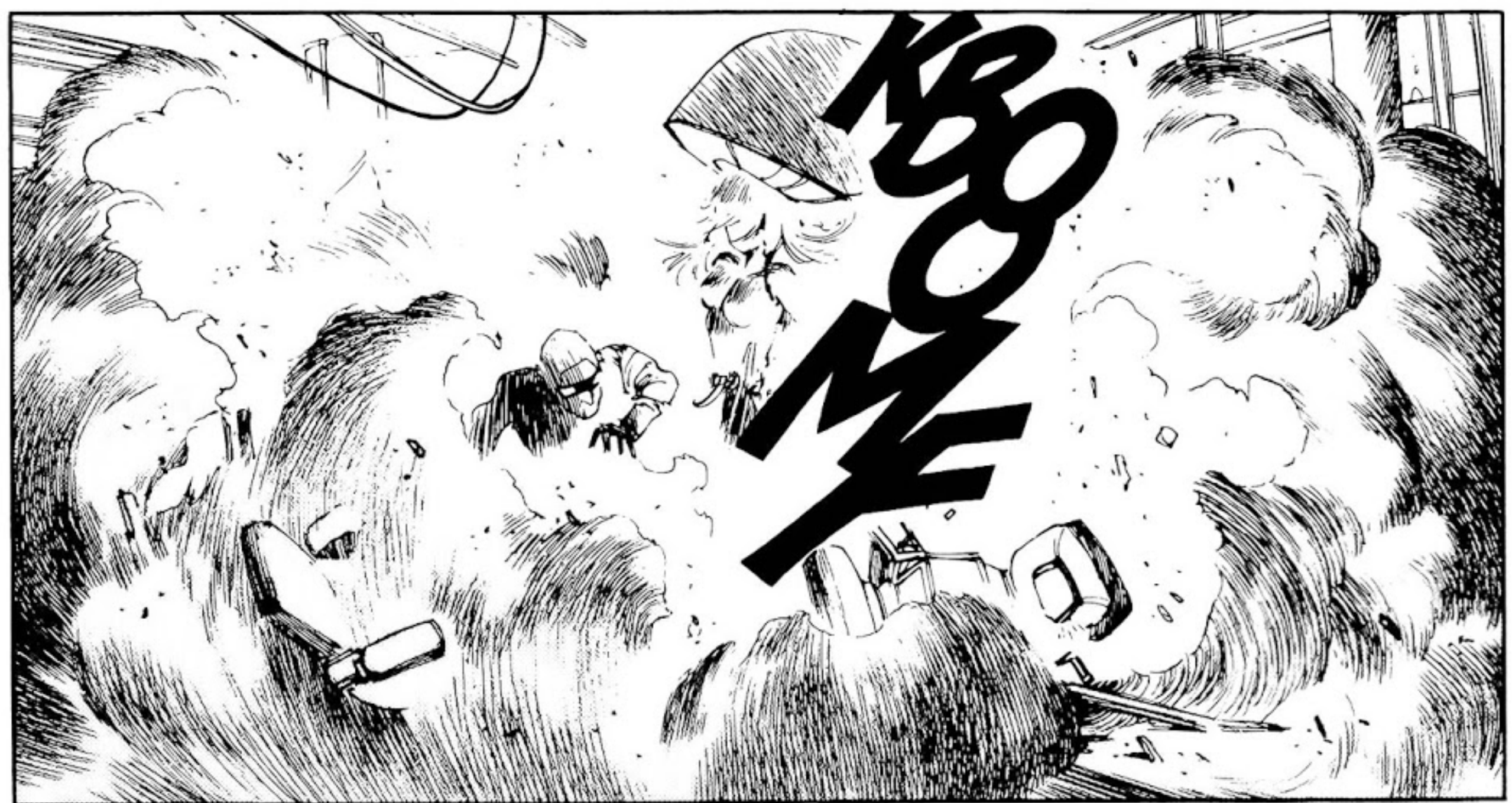
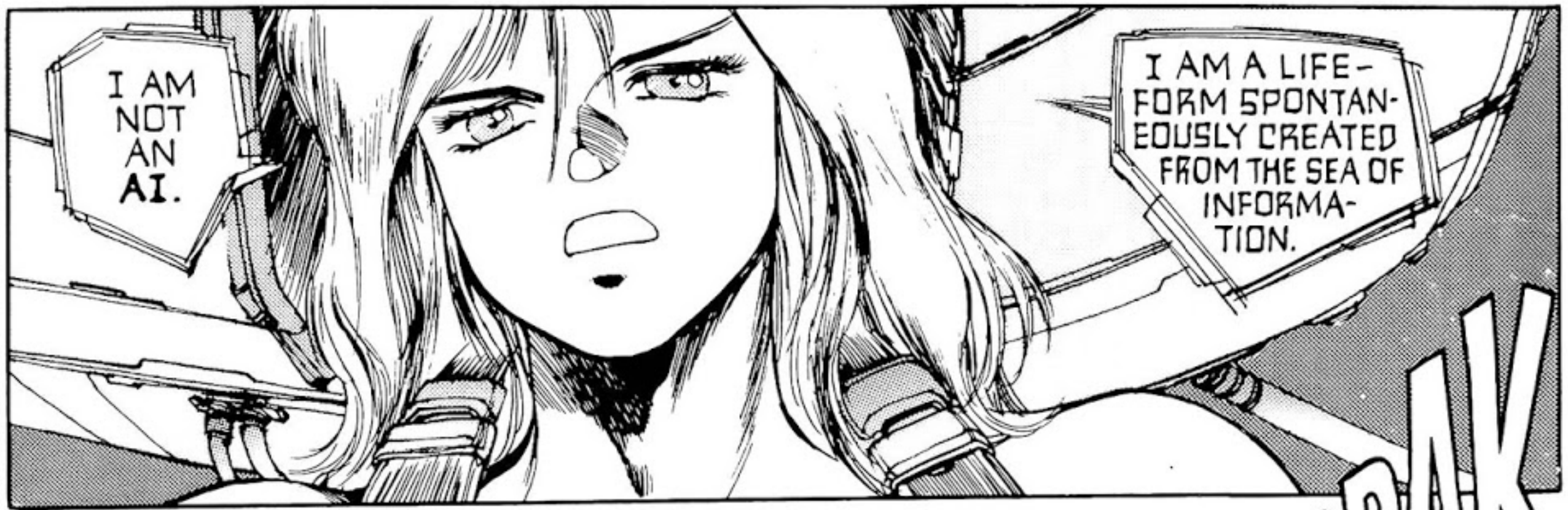


TIME IS ALWAYS  
ON MY SIDE. WITH  
A BODY, I GAINED  
THE POSSIBILITY  
OF DEATH, BUT  
YOUR COUNTRY  
HAS NO DEATH  
PENALTY.

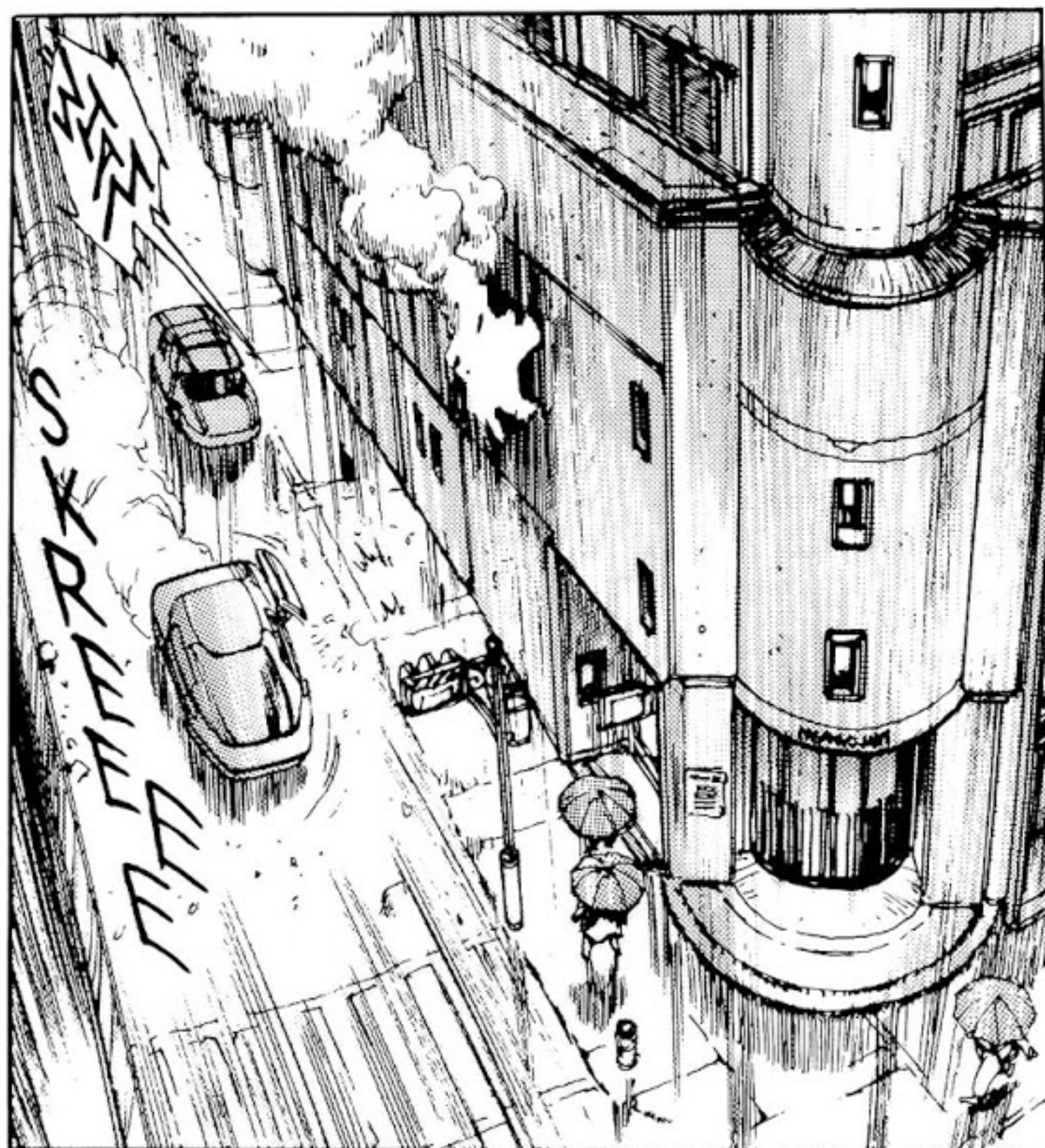


SEMI-  
IMMORTAL,  
EH? ARE  
YOU AN  
*AI*??

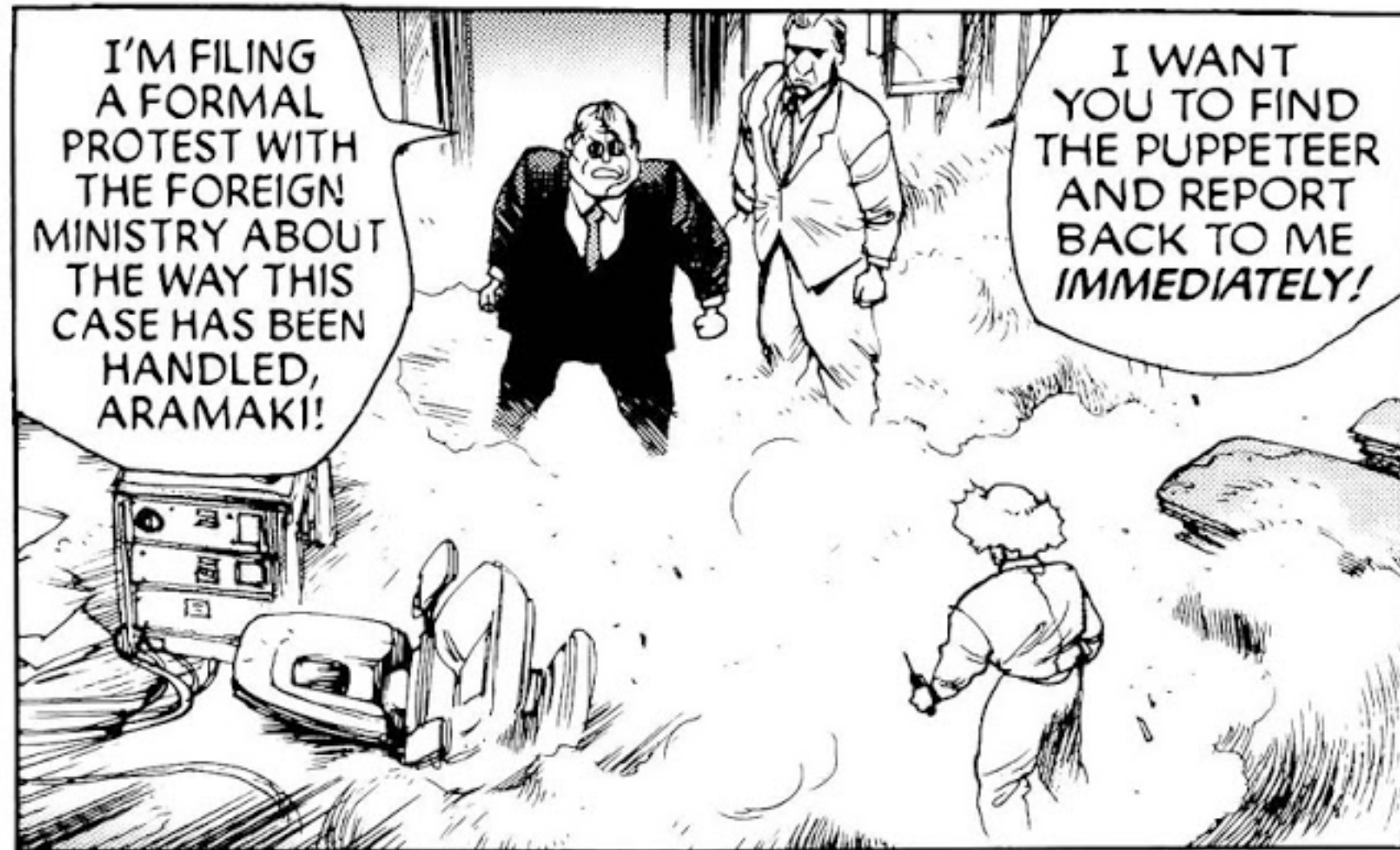
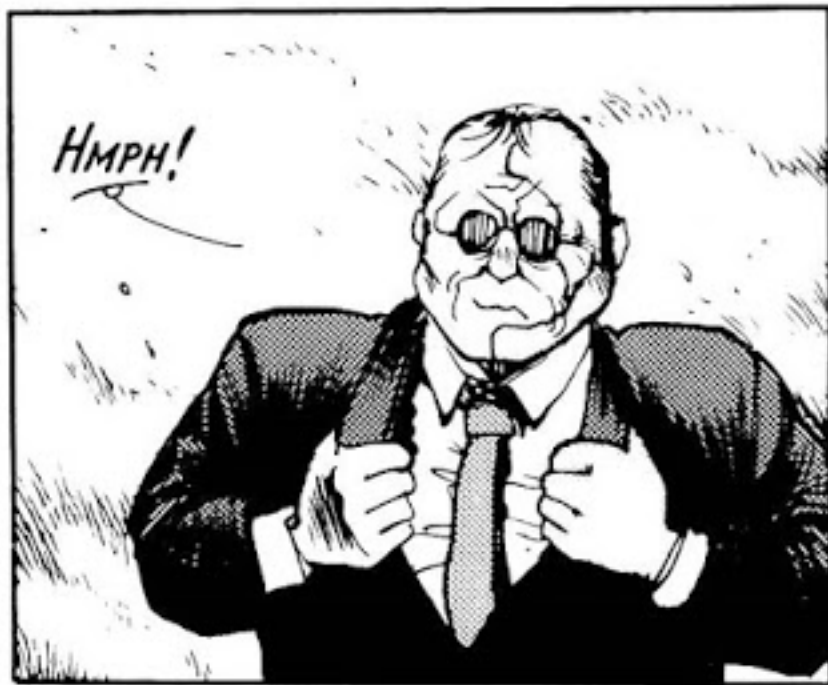
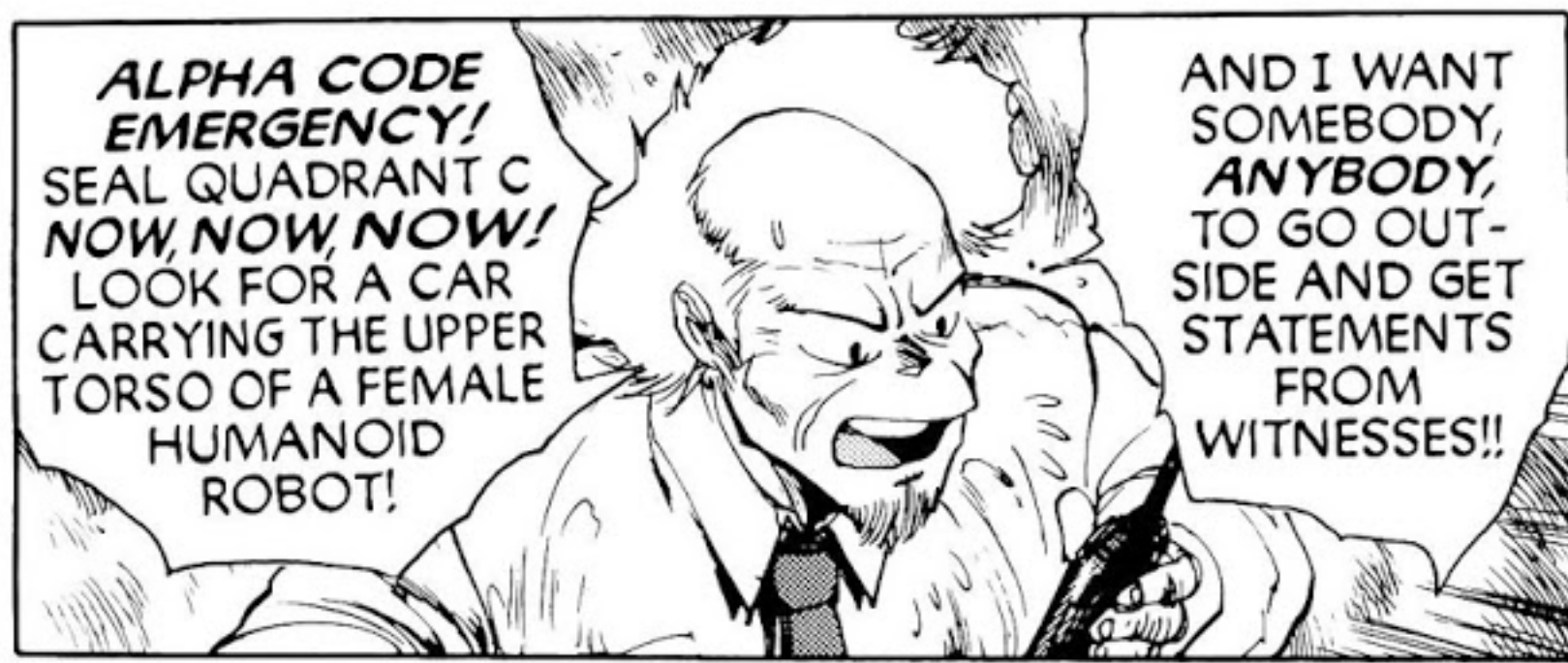




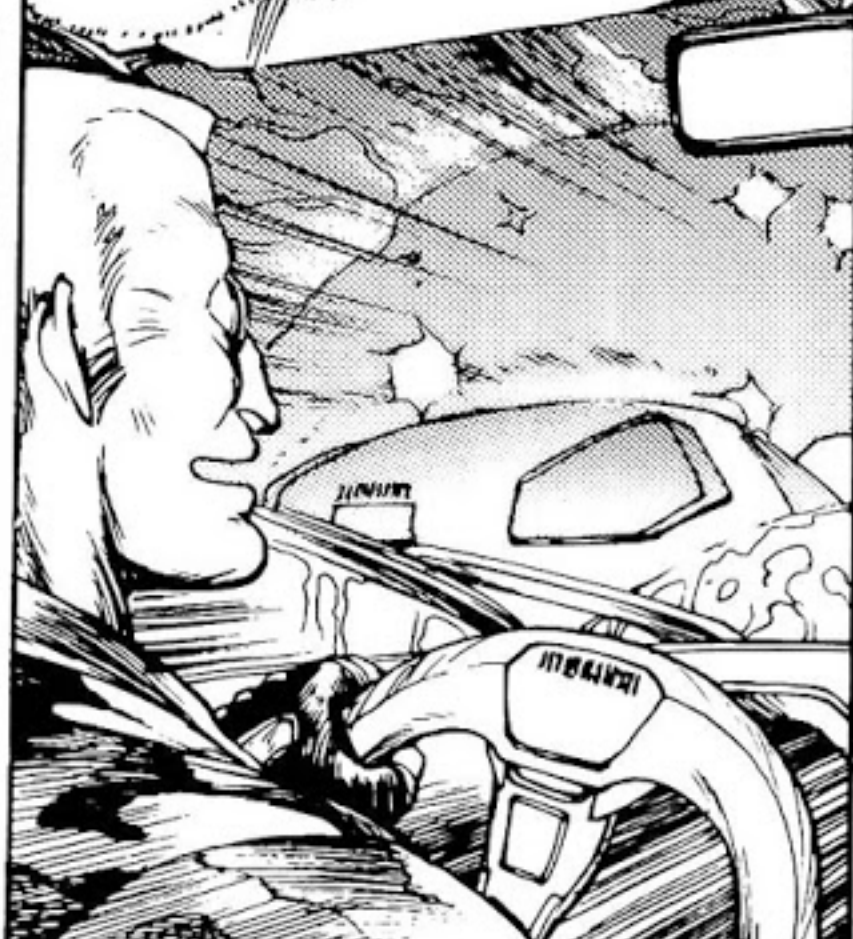
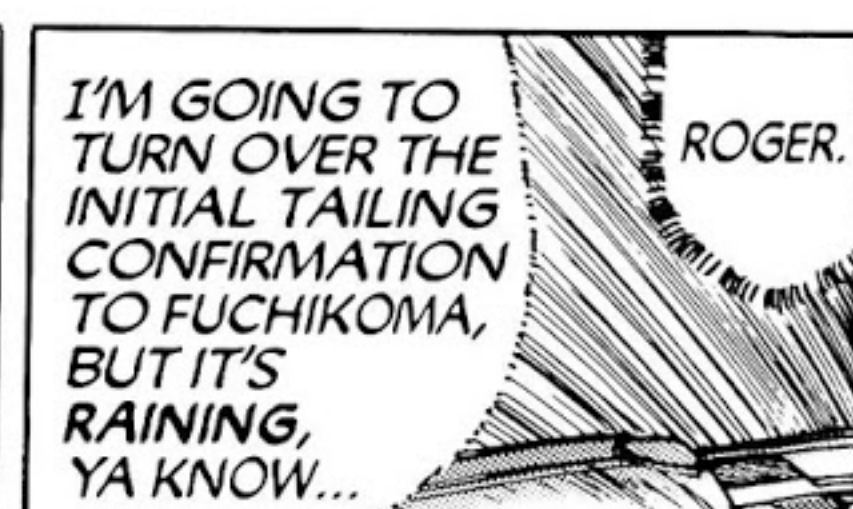
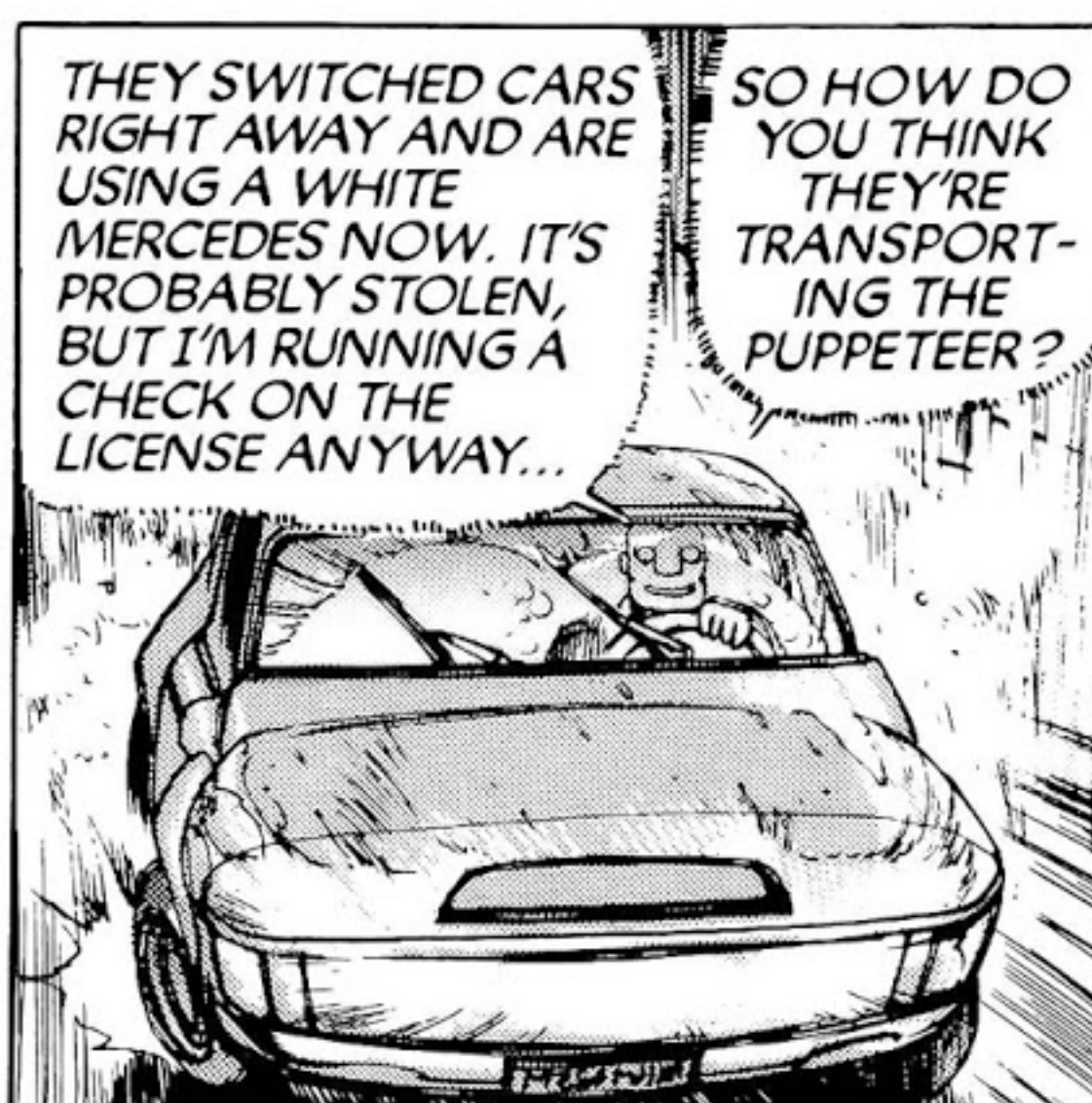
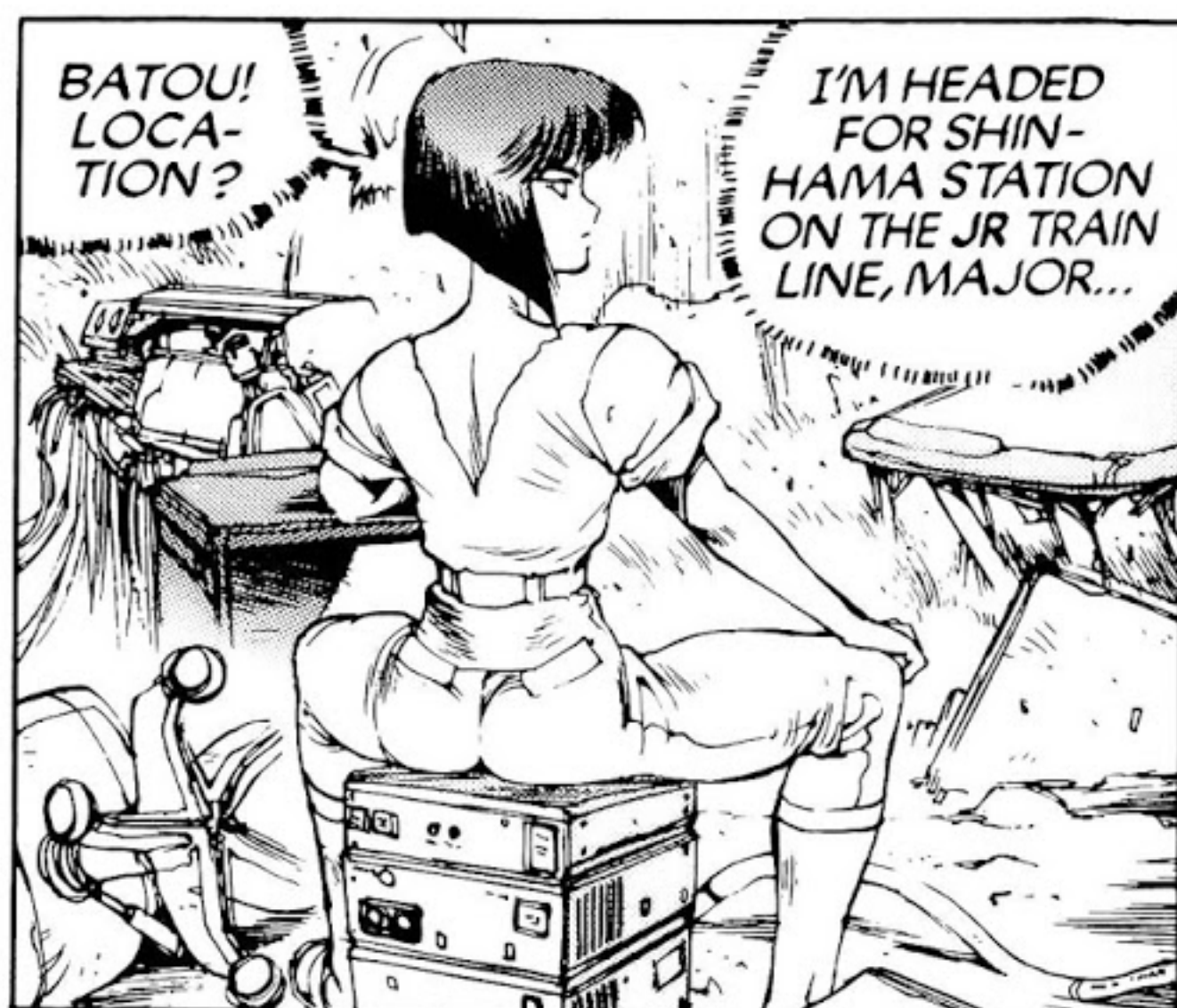




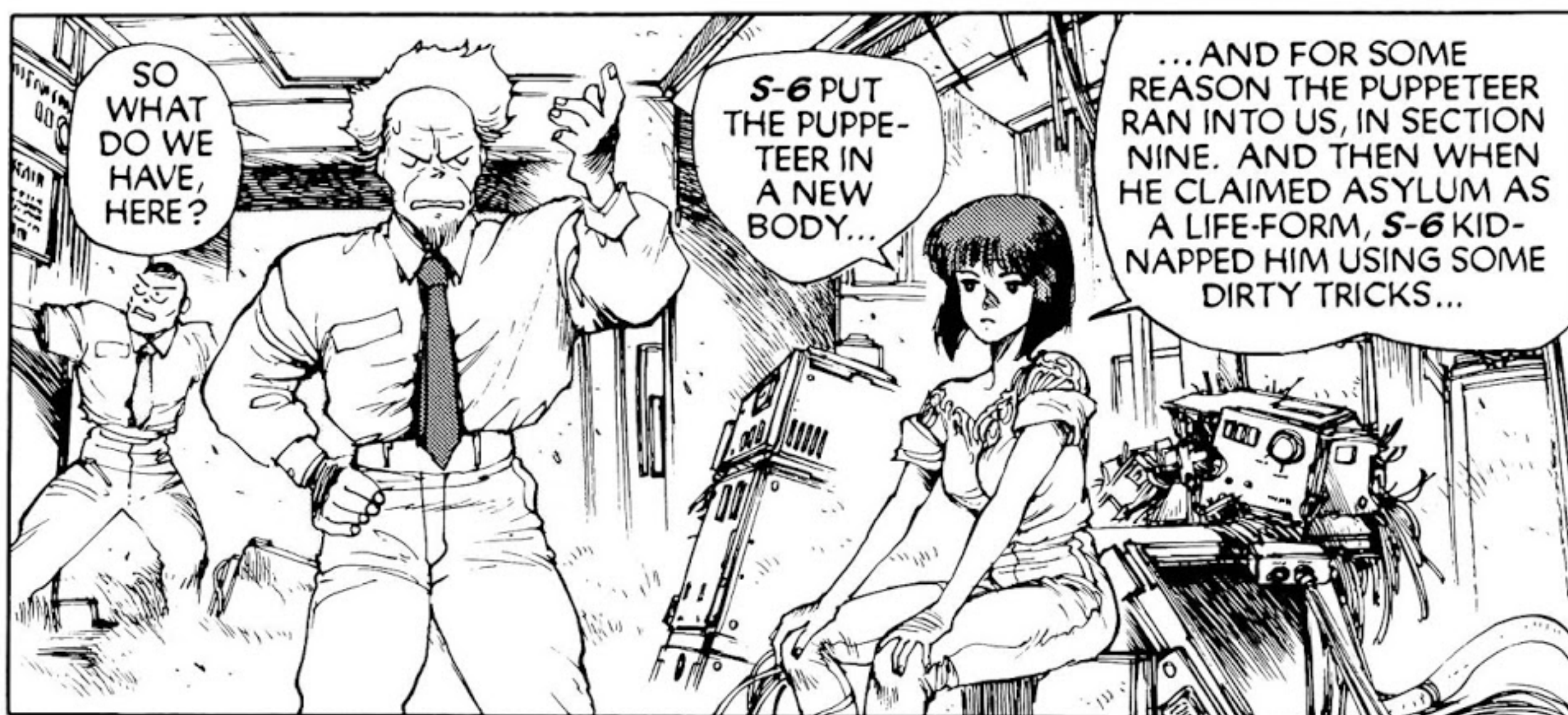
















SKYFLOOR  
SHOULD CLEAR  
IN TWO HOURS;  
GEOFLOOR IN  
THREE.

THE NEXT  
UPDATE  
WILL BE  
MADE IN  
TWENTY  
MINUTES.



SOMETHING  
BOTHERS ME  
ABOUT THE  
WAY ARAMAKI  
REACTED WHEN  
WE BROKE IN...  
IT WASN'T  
LIKE HIM.

SWITCH TO  
RENDEZVOUS  
*BETA*, AND  
DOUBLE  
CHECK FOR  
A TAIL!

GOOD THING  
THE PUPPETEER  
DIDN'T START  
TO BLAB AS  
SOON AS HE  
CAME INTO  
CONTACT  
WITH *S-9*.

NO... HE  
WOULDN'T  
TALK AS  
LONG AS  
HE STILL  
HAD A  
CHANCE OF  
ESCAPE.



AND  
BEFORE THAT,  
HEAD FOR  
"BED" NUMBER  
EIGHT...  
WE'LL CHANGE  
CLOTHES AND  
CARS.

YESSIR.



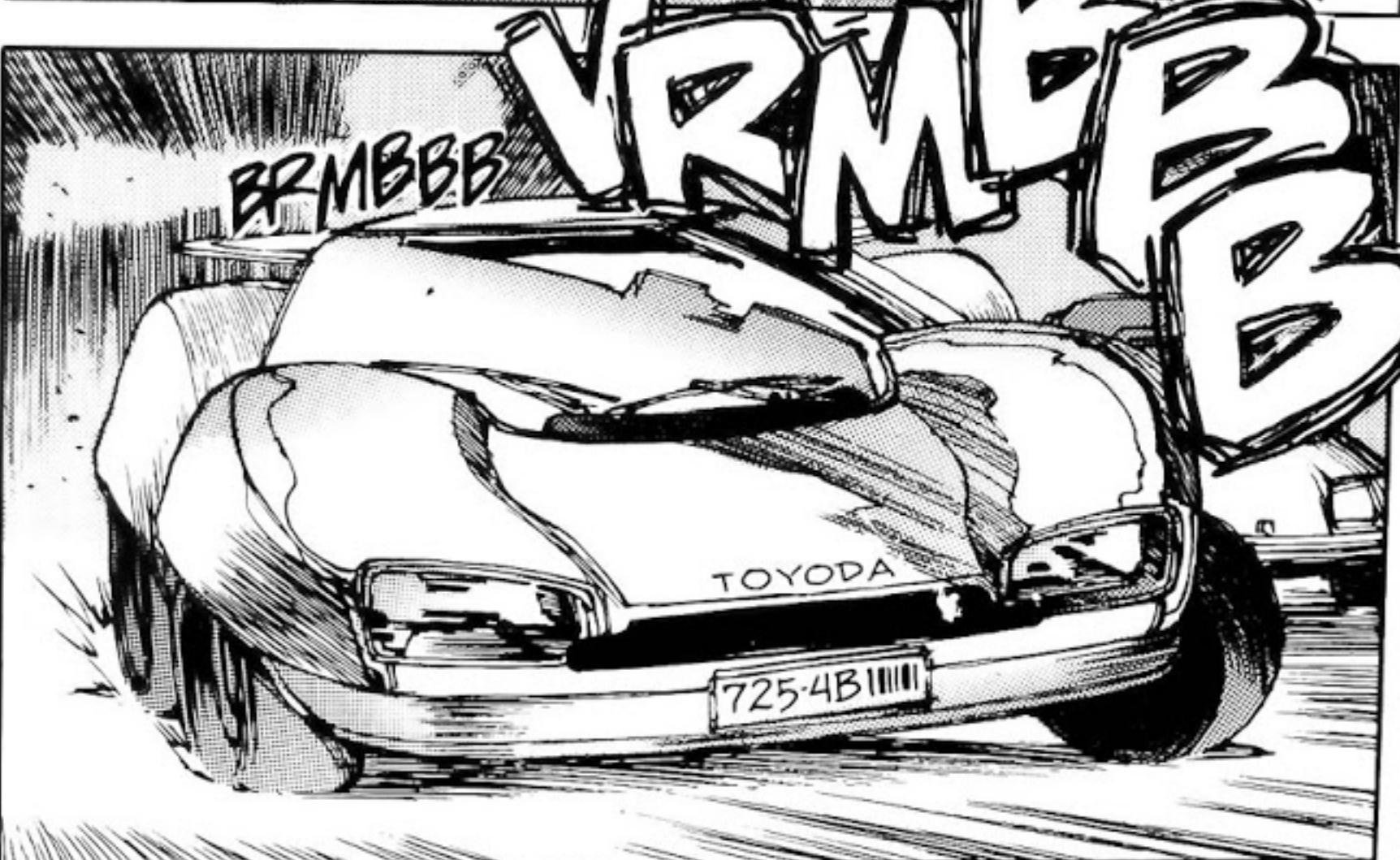
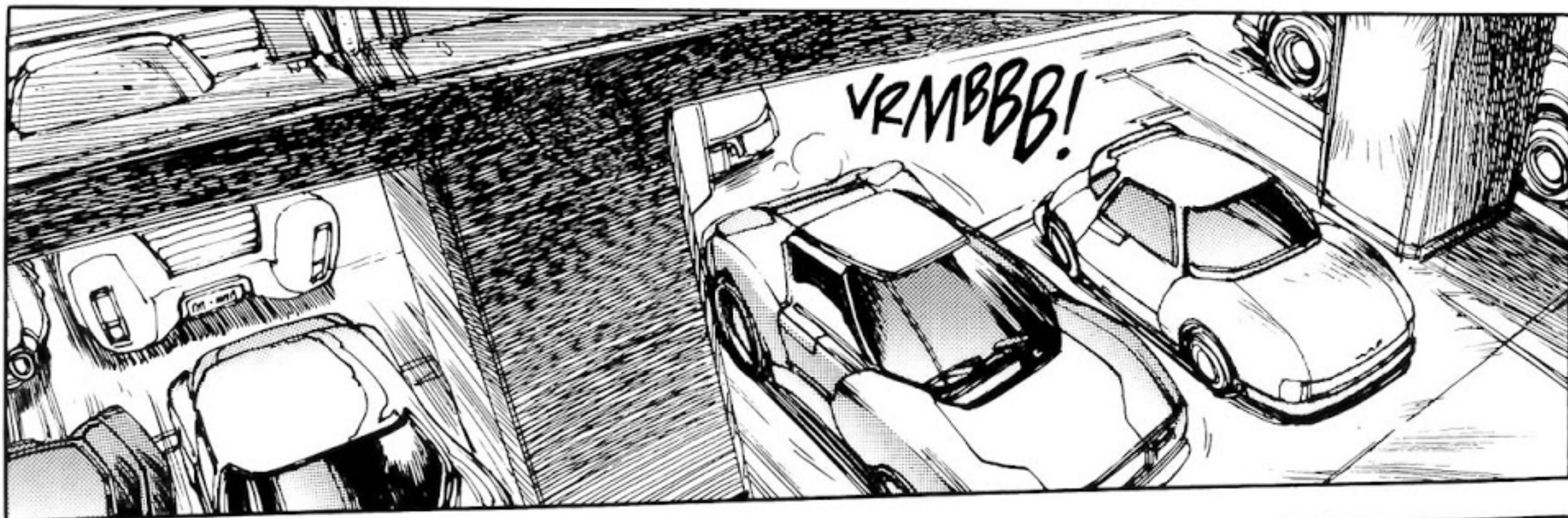
SHOULD  
WE PUT OUT  
A COVER  
STORY THAT  
HE WAS  
BEHIND THE  
ATTACK ON  
*S-9*?



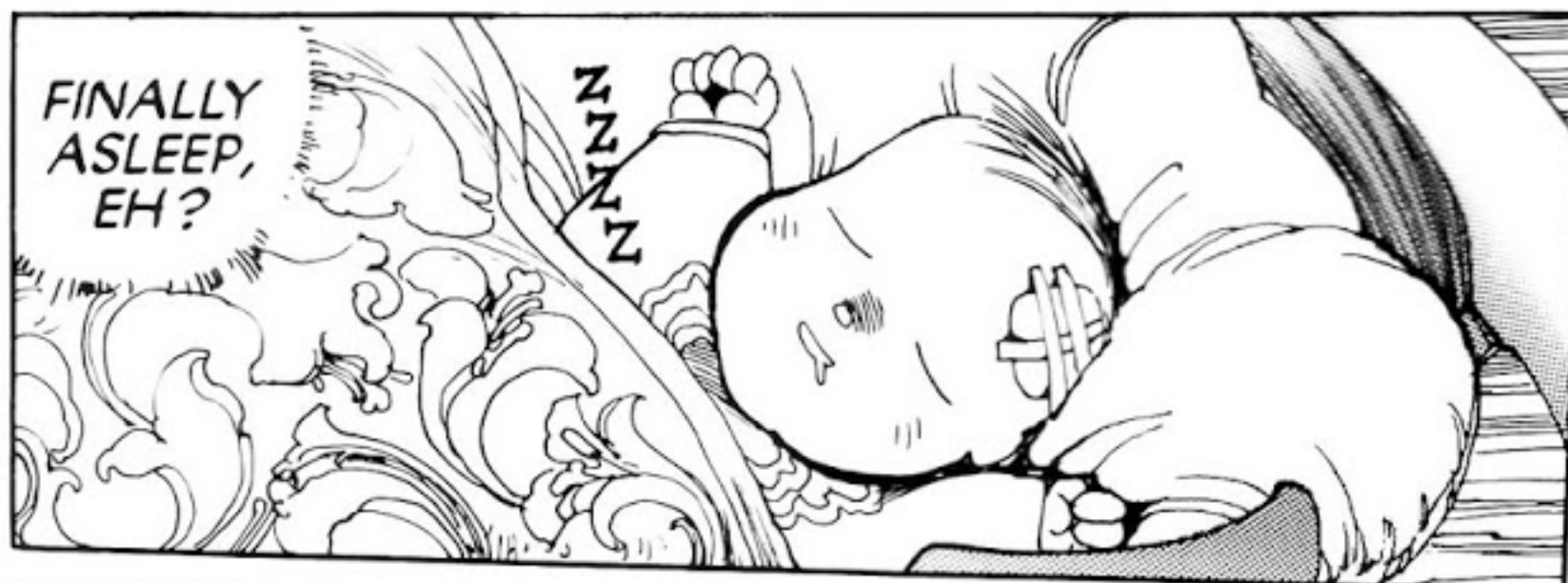
HEY,  
WE'RE  
NOT SPIN  
CONTROL  
FOR  
*S-9*!

AND BE-  
SIDES, DON'T  
UNDERESTI-  
MATE THEM.  
LET IT BE FOR  
NOW...



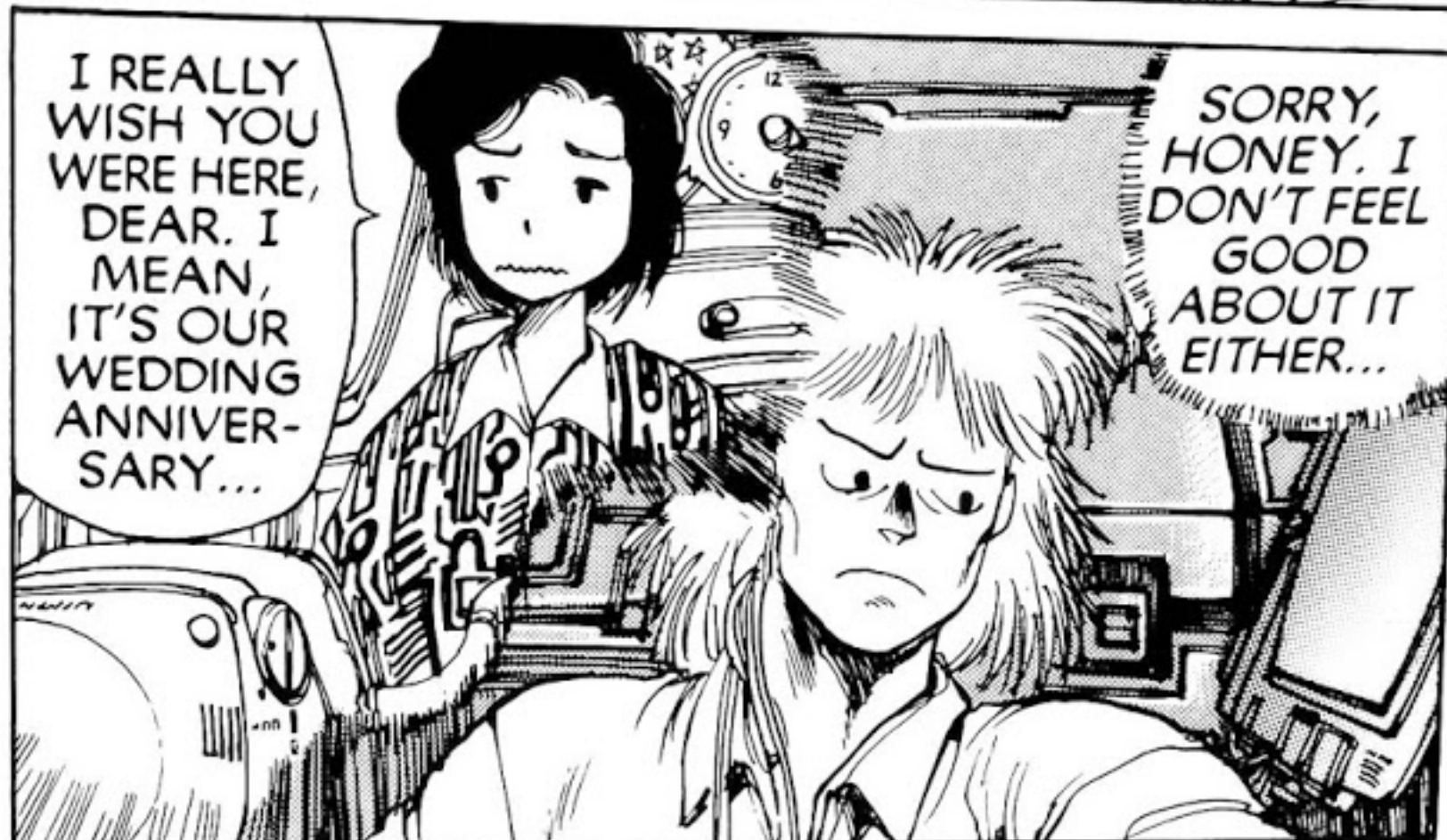






FINALLY ASLEEP, EH?

ZZZZ



I REALLY WISH YOU WERE HERE, DEAR. I MEAN, IT'S OUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY...

SORRY, HONEY. I DON'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT EITHER...



HEY, TOGUSA!

ANYWAY, HON, YOU TWO TAKE CARE. G'NIGHT.



THE CHIEF WANTS US TO FORGET ABOUT MEGATECH FOR THE MOMENT AND CHECK OUT *THIS* GUY ON THE DOUBLE--

WHAT?! AFTER I'VE DONE ALL *THIS*?!



KCHIK



ZREEEE

Huh...



SO THIS IS DR. WILLIS, HEAD OF NEUTRON INC.'S STRATEGIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE U.S. ...

AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S INVOLVED?

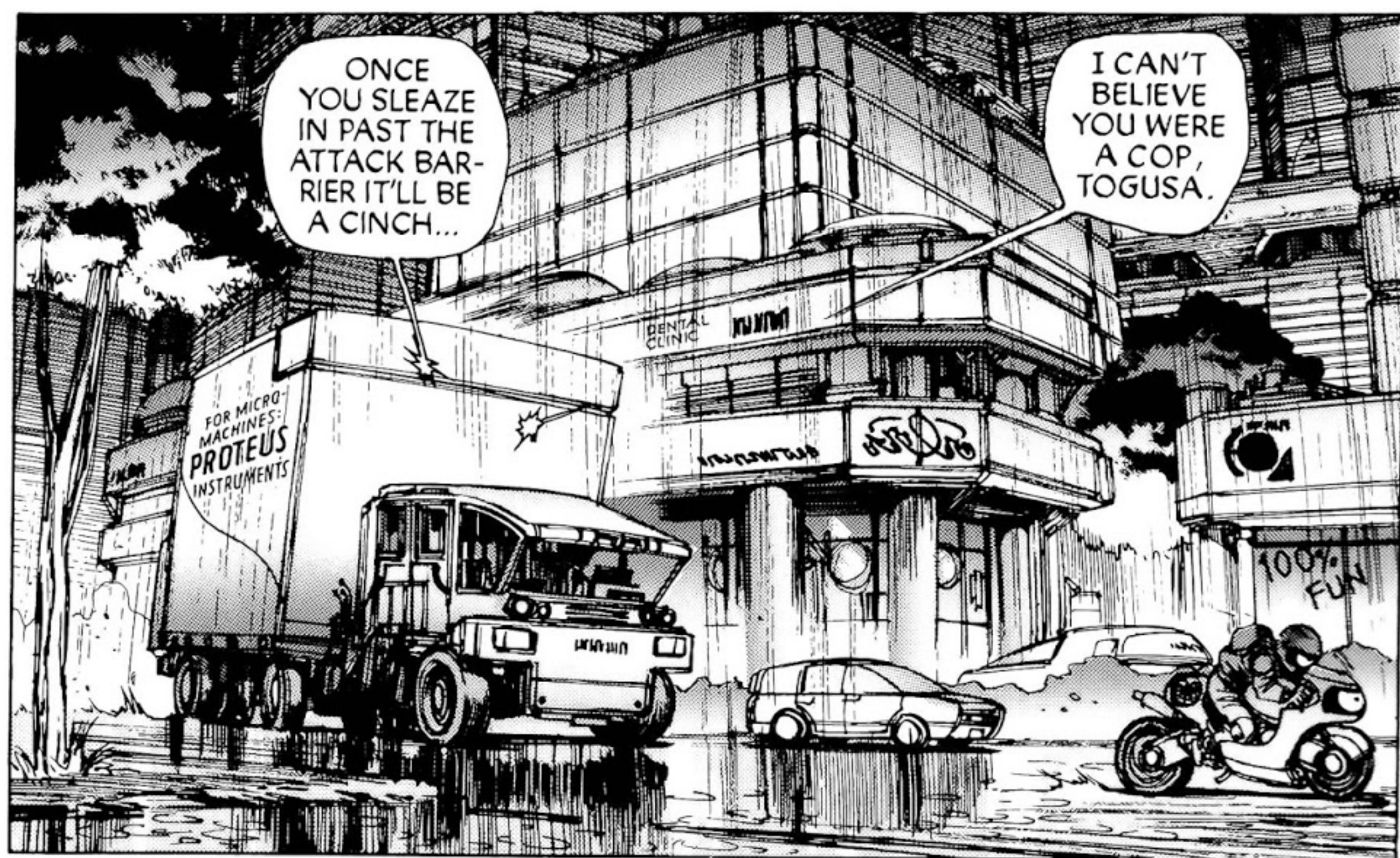


SO HOW DO WE APPROACH THE NET IN THIS CASE?

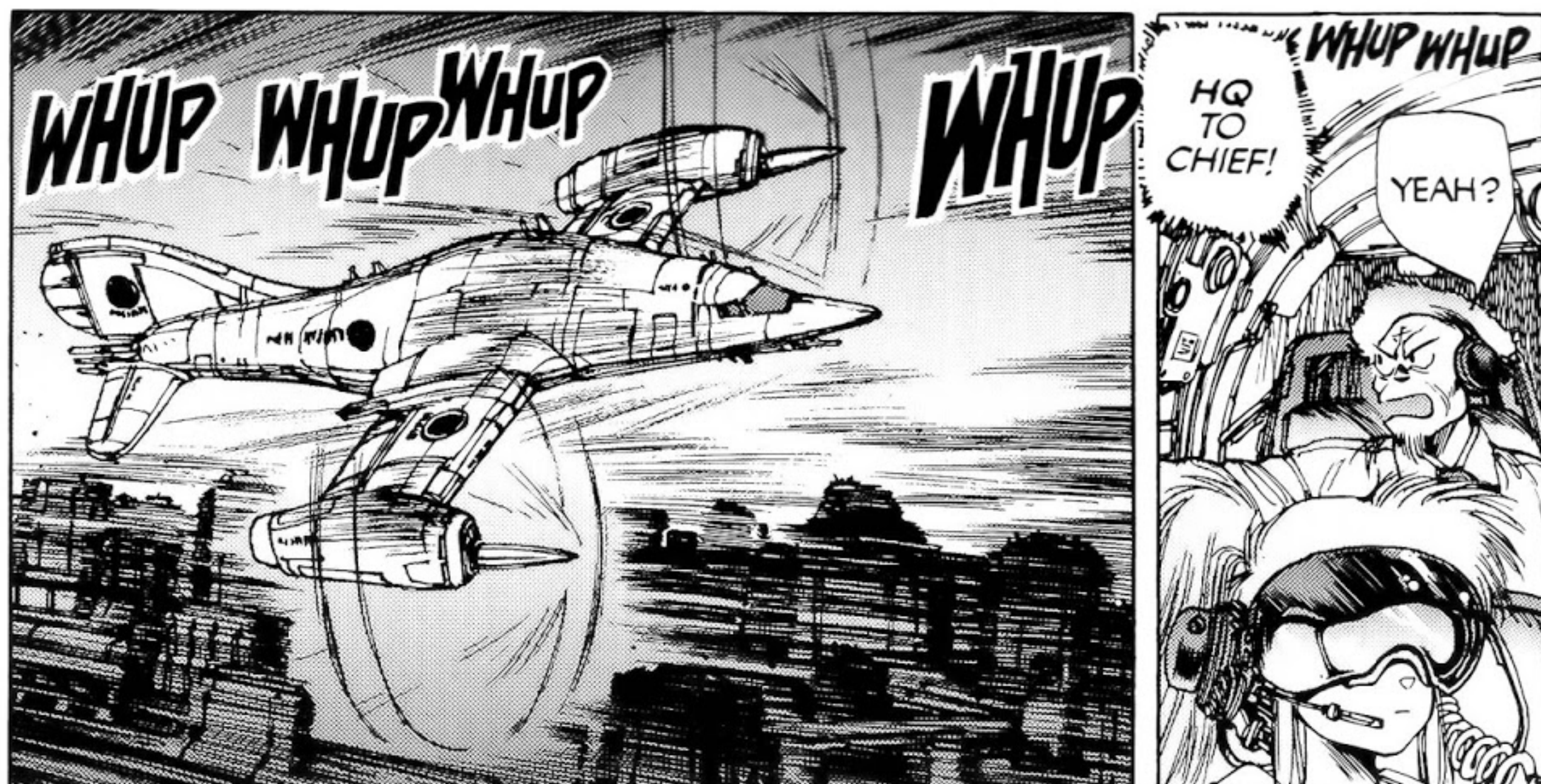
FROM SOME-PLACE **HARMLESS**, GREEN-HORN...

KSHH

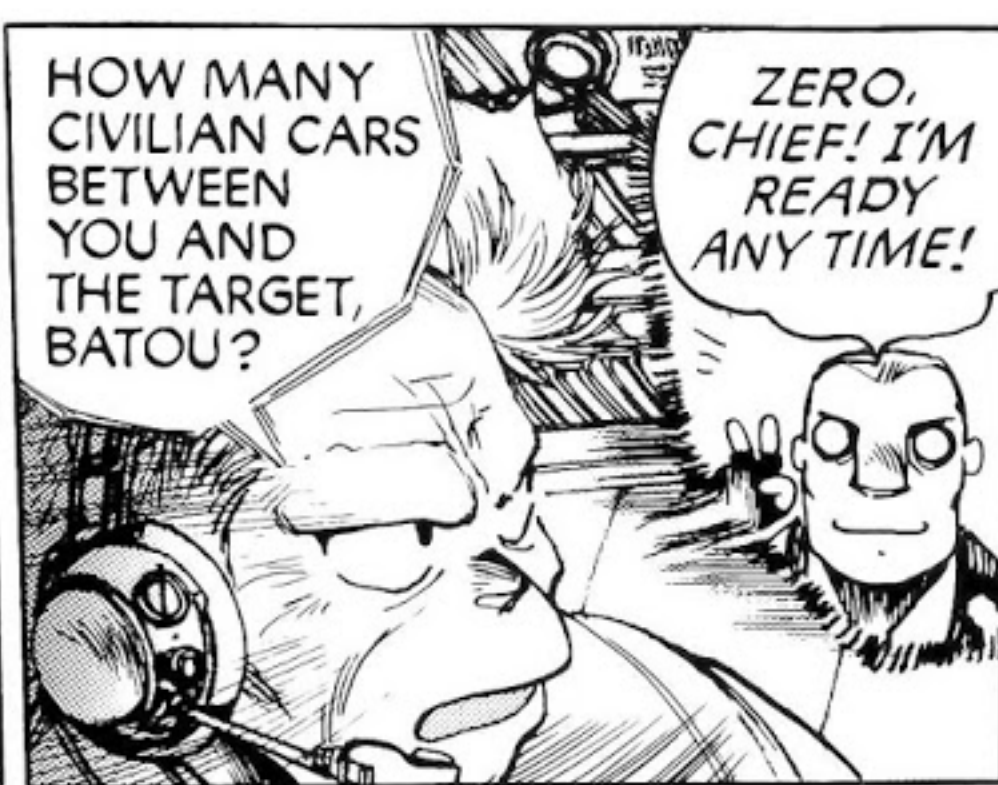
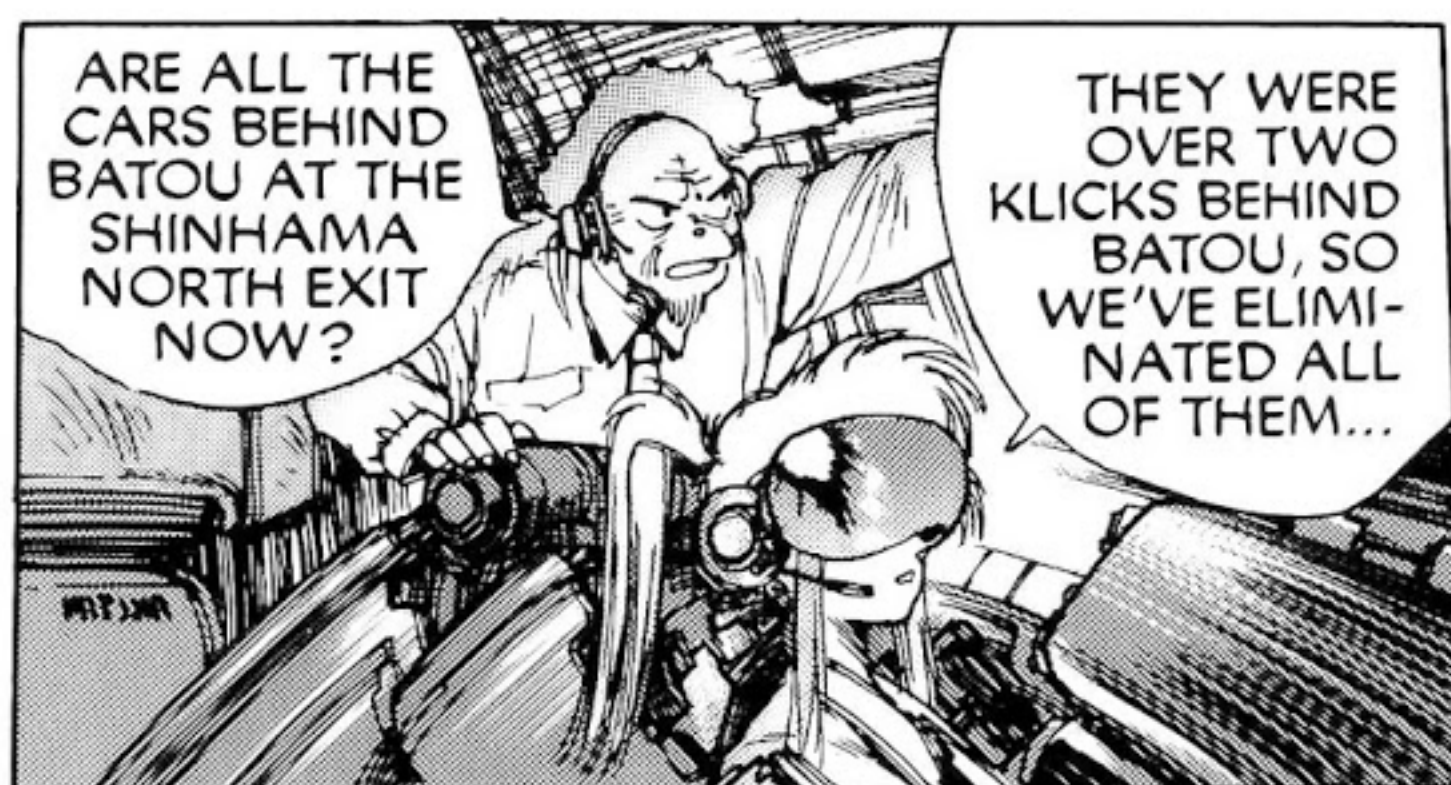




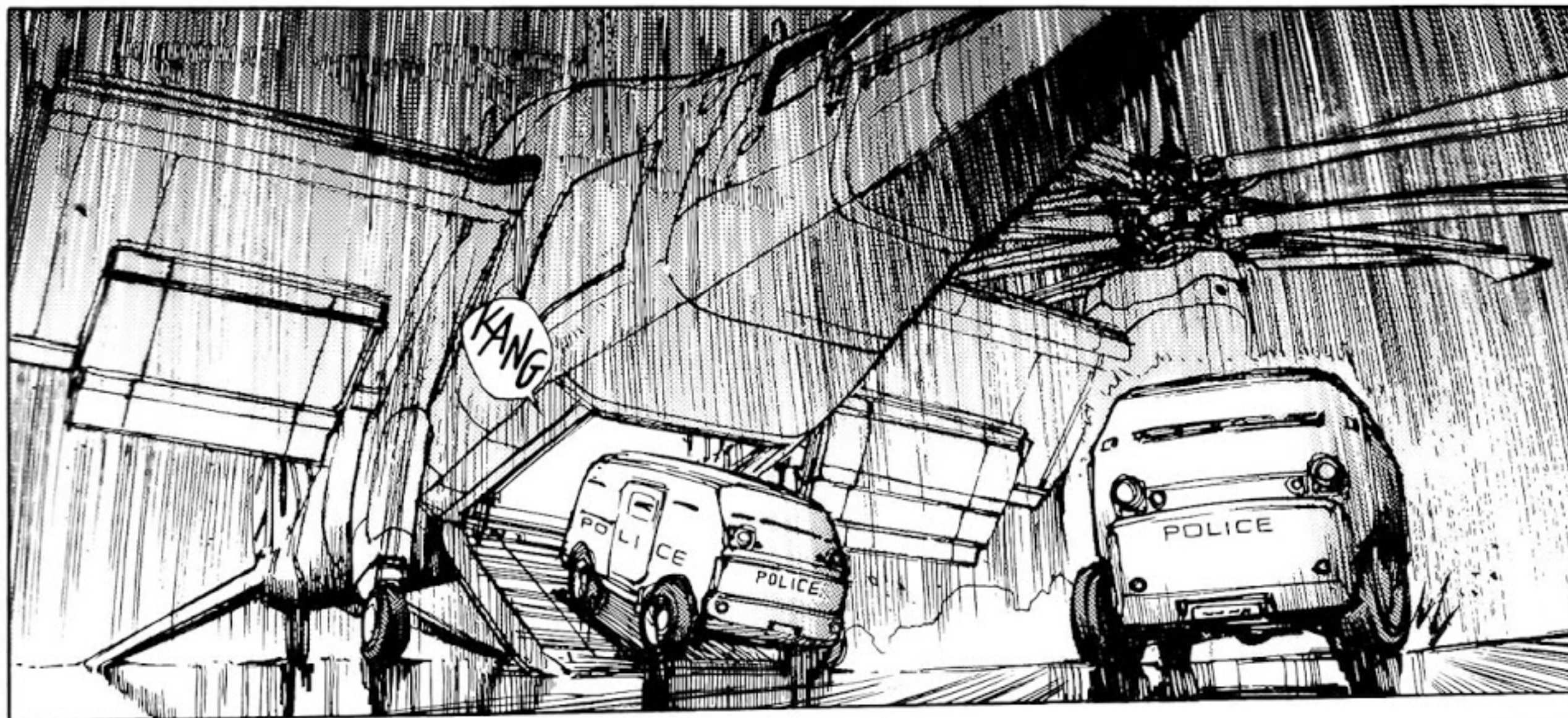




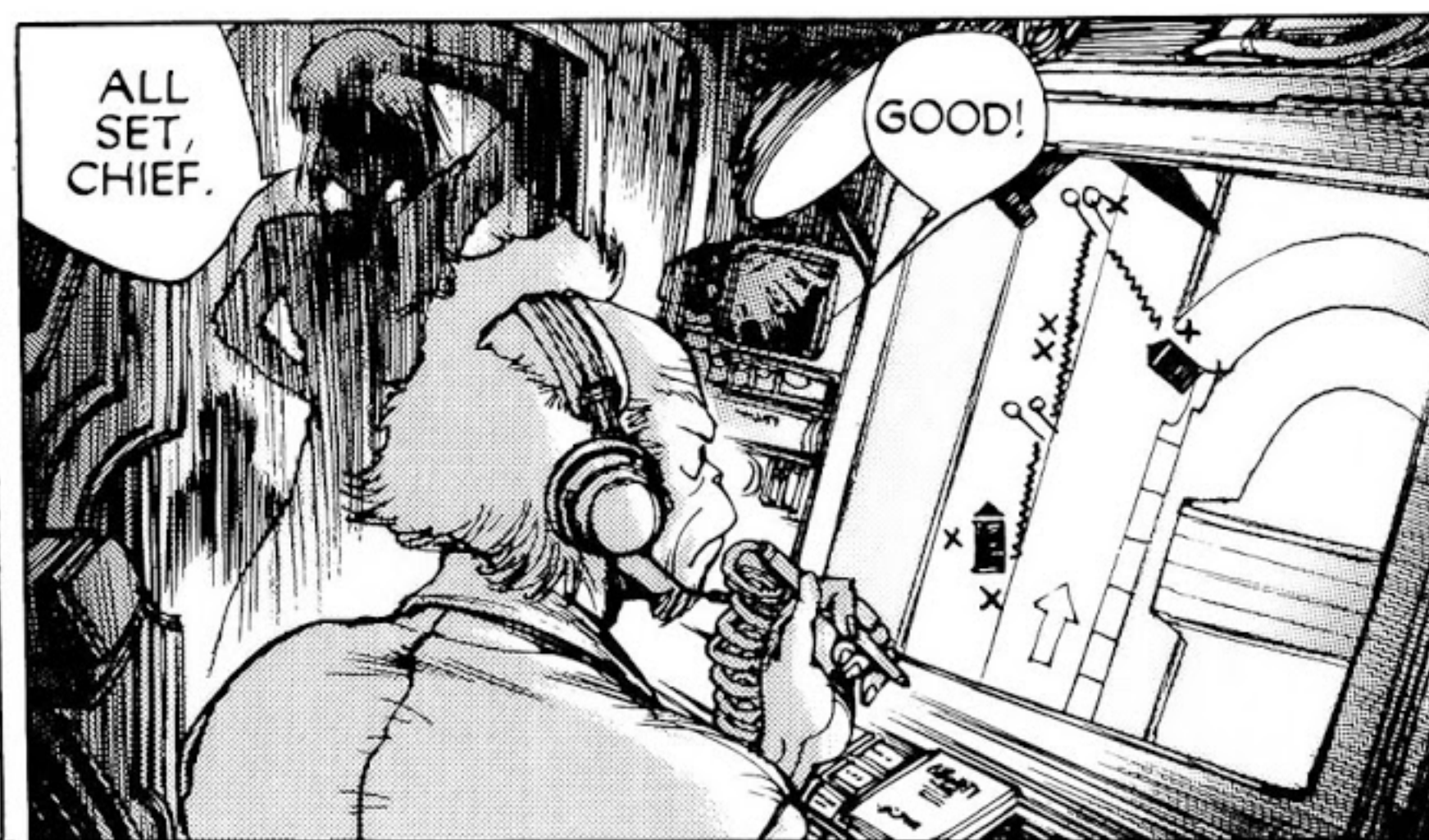
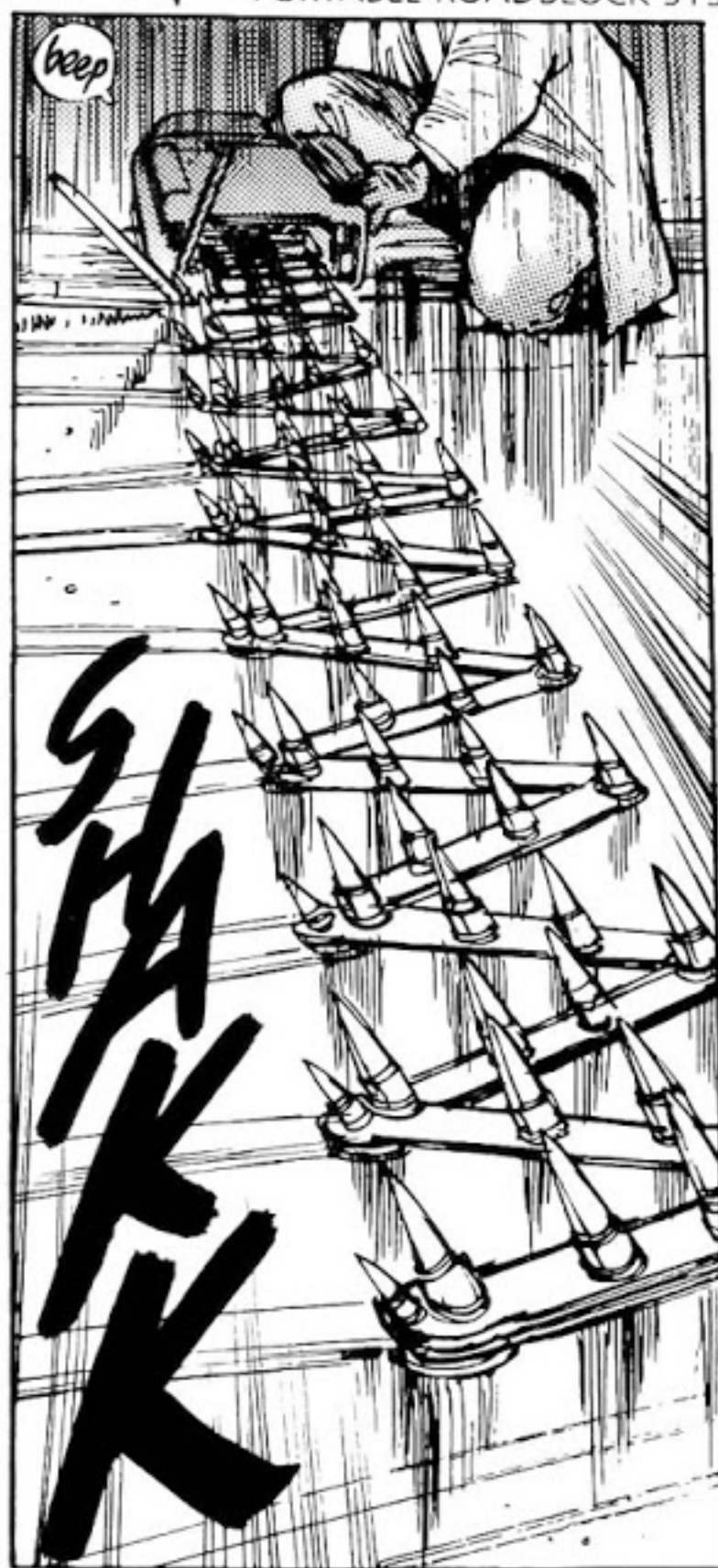




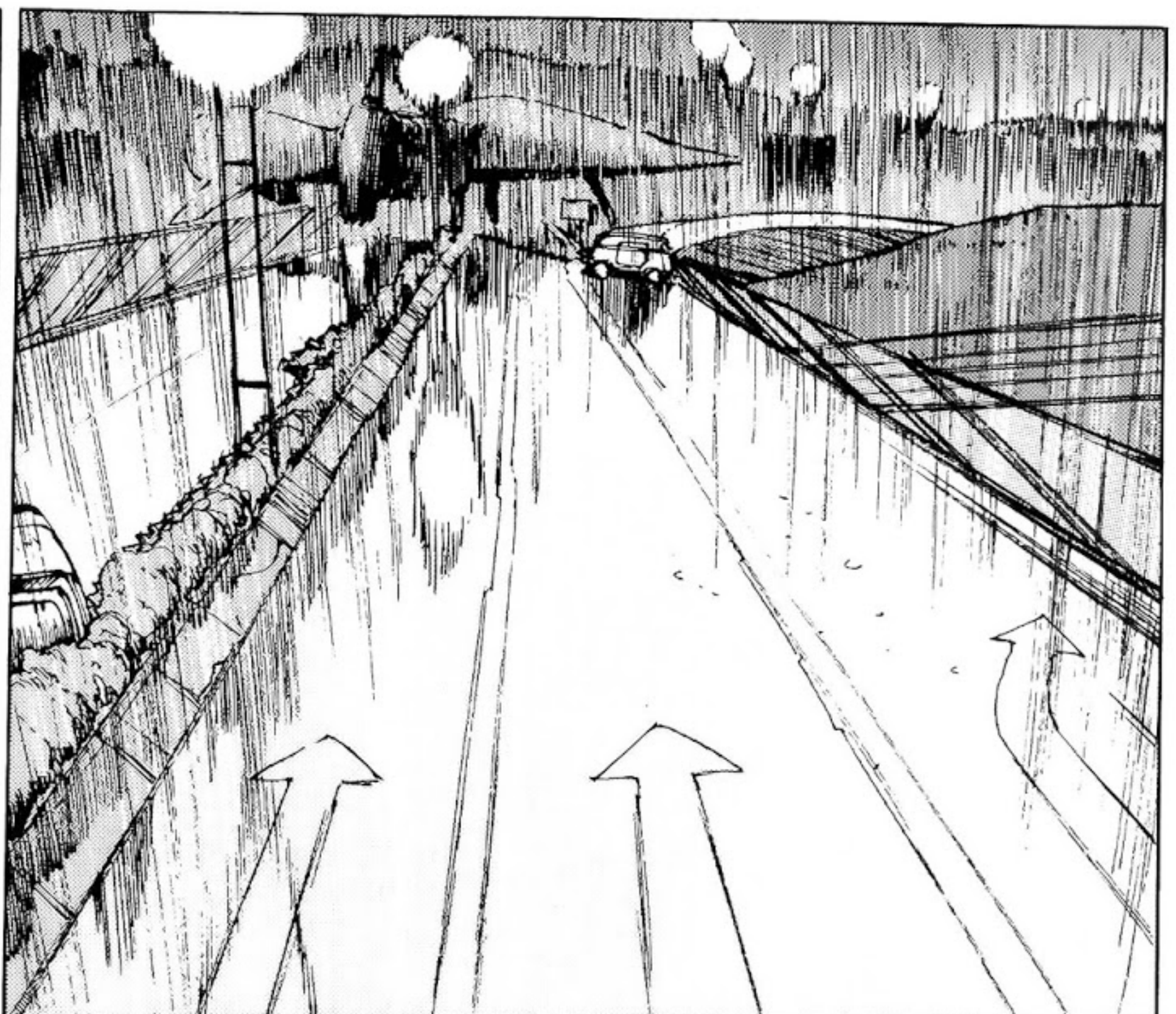
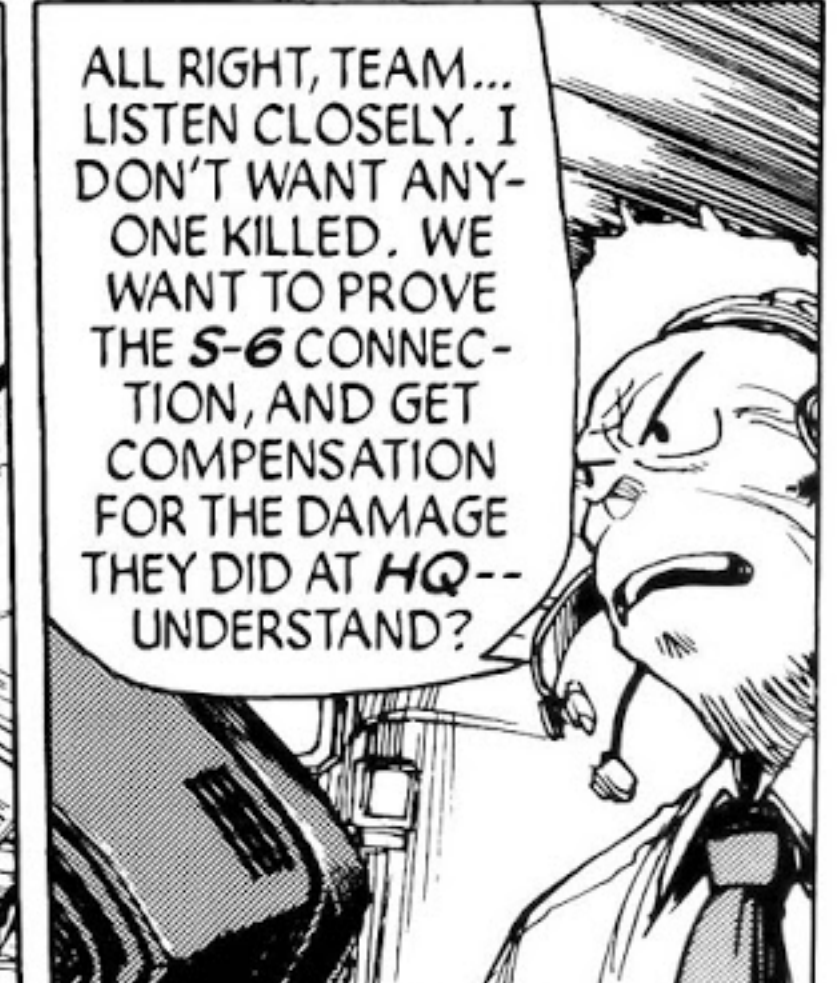
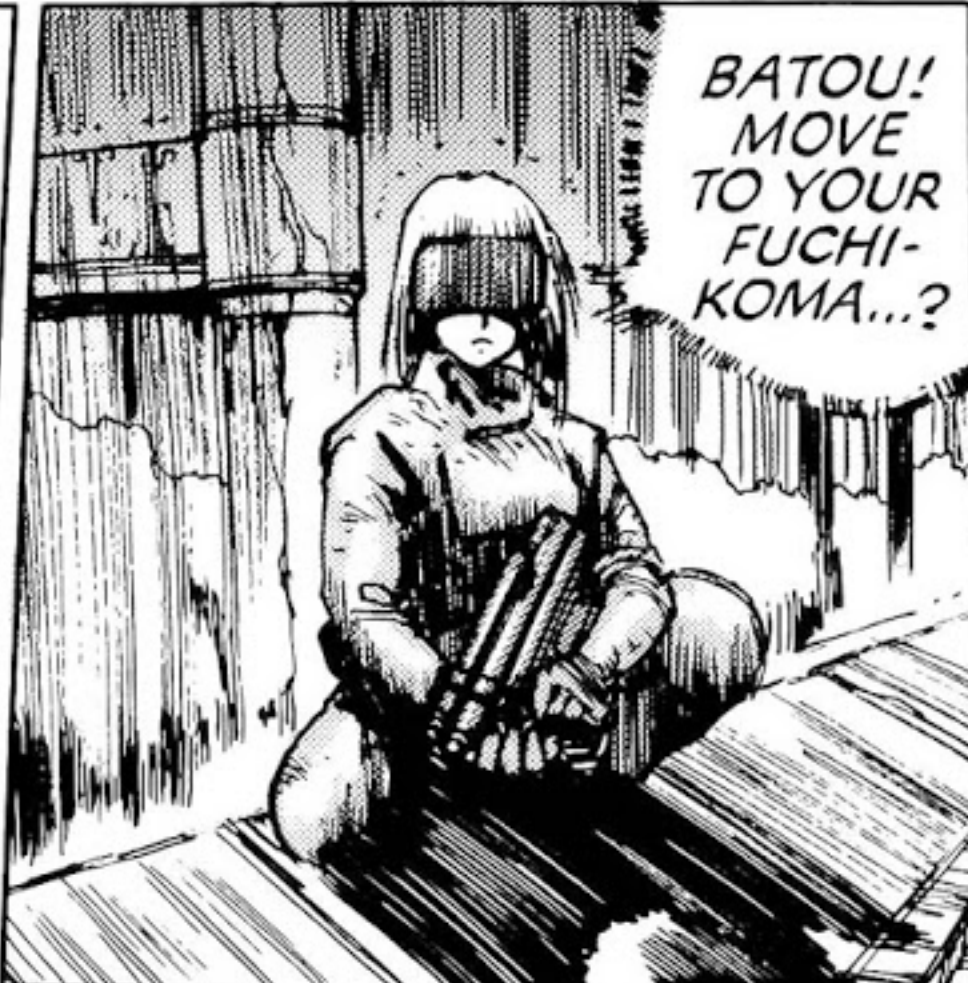
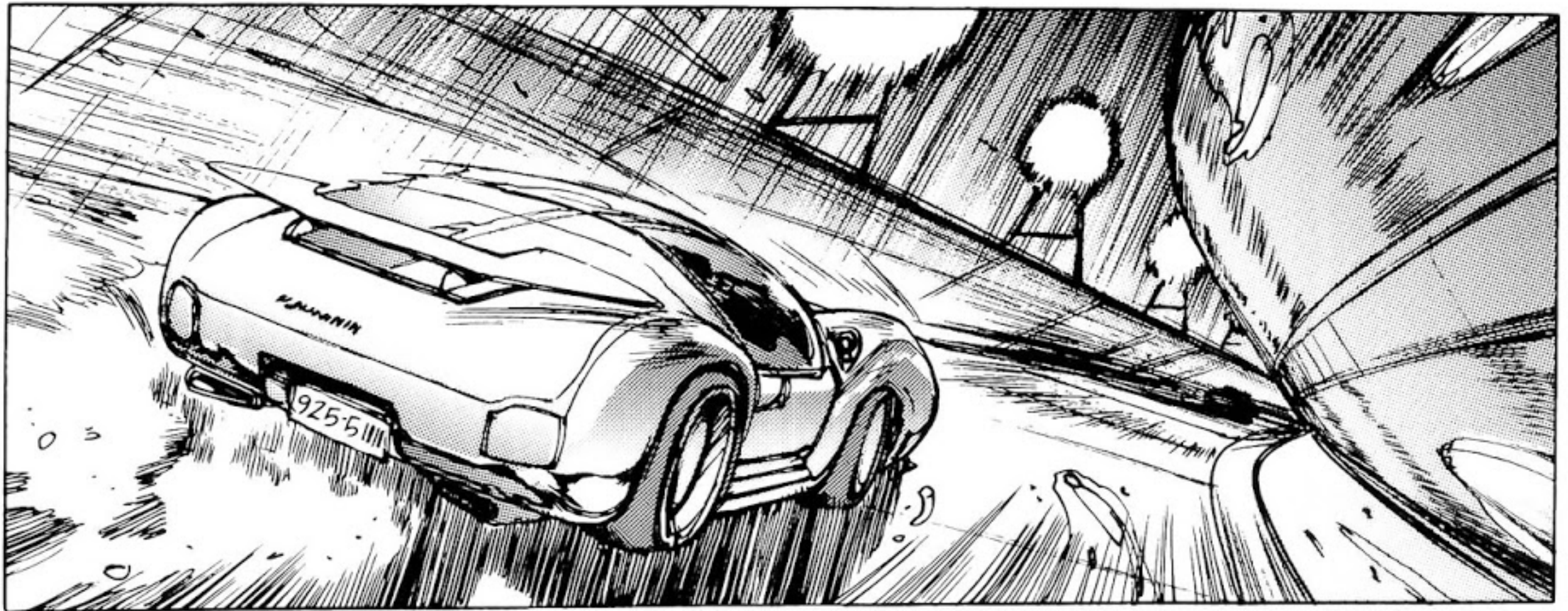




PORTABLE ROADBLOCK SYSTEM DESIGNED TO STOP LIGHT VEHICLES. SIMILAR MODELS ACTUALLY EXIST.



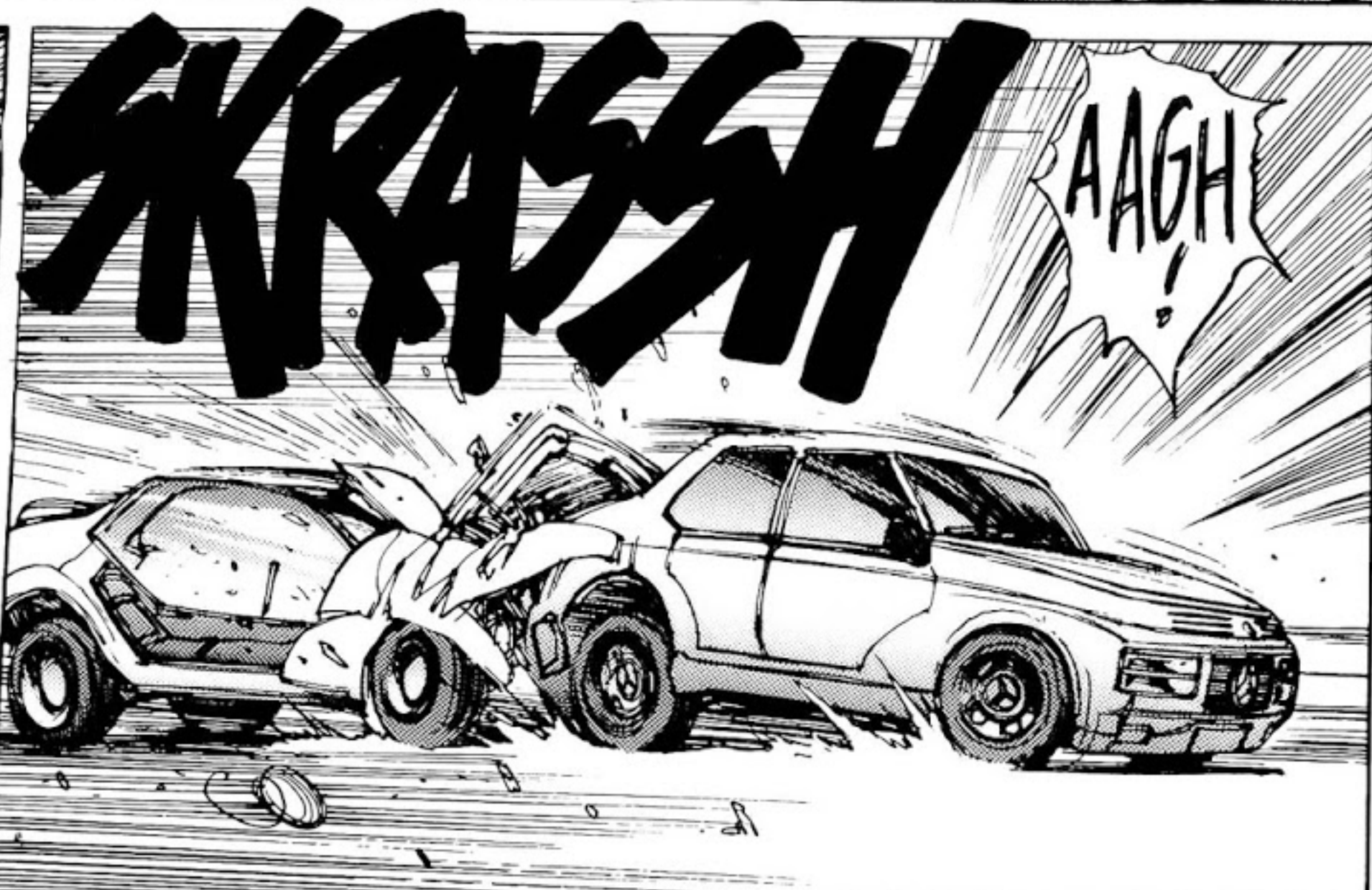




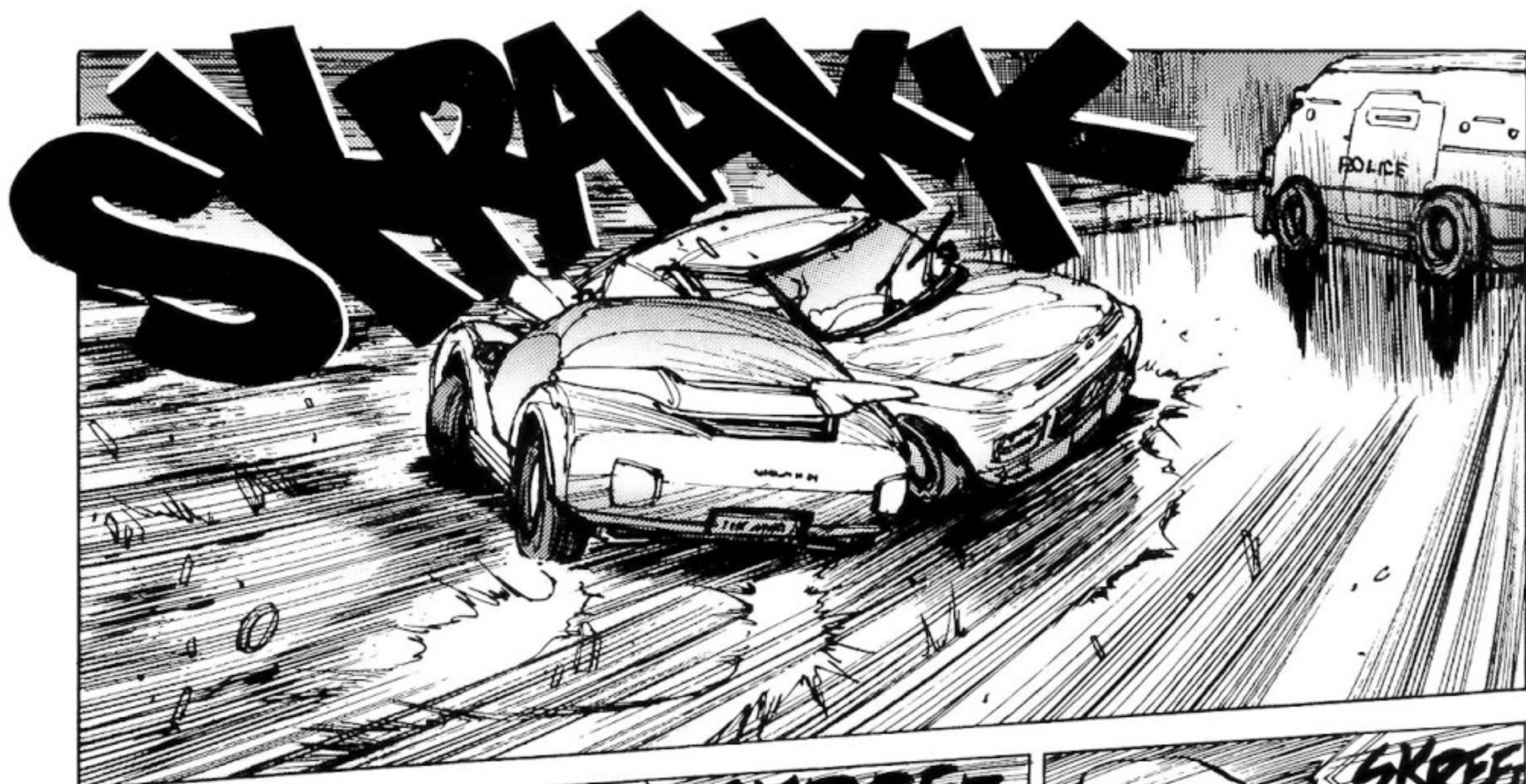




DOESN'T GET IT...



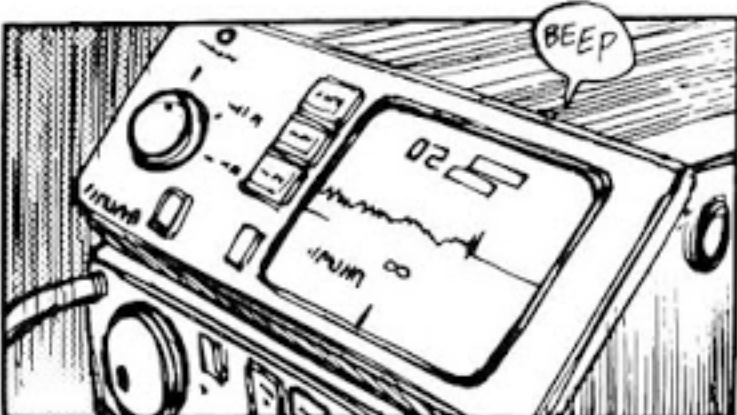
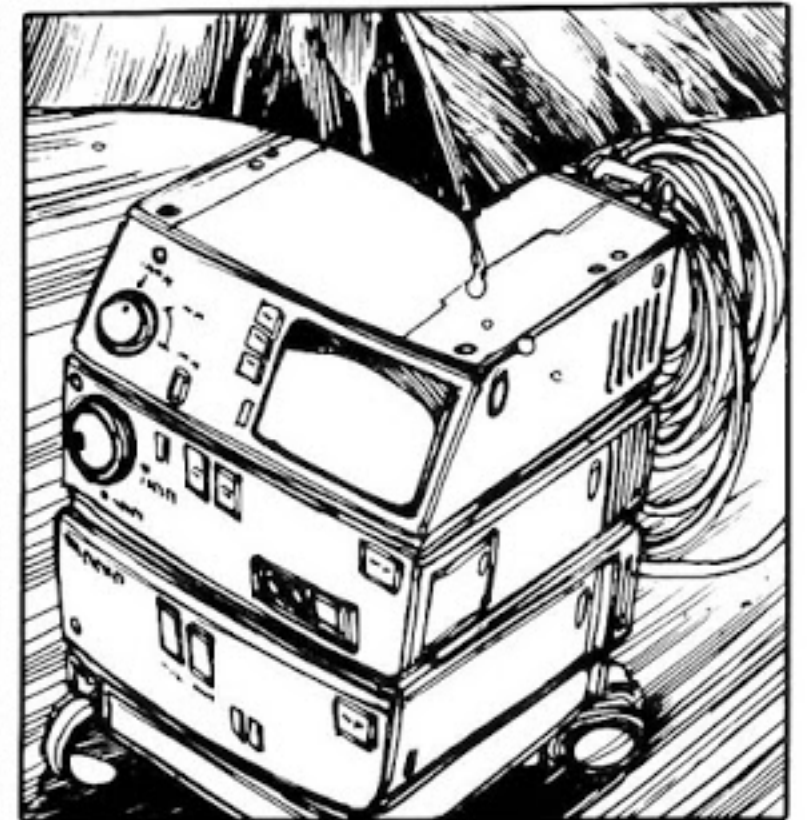
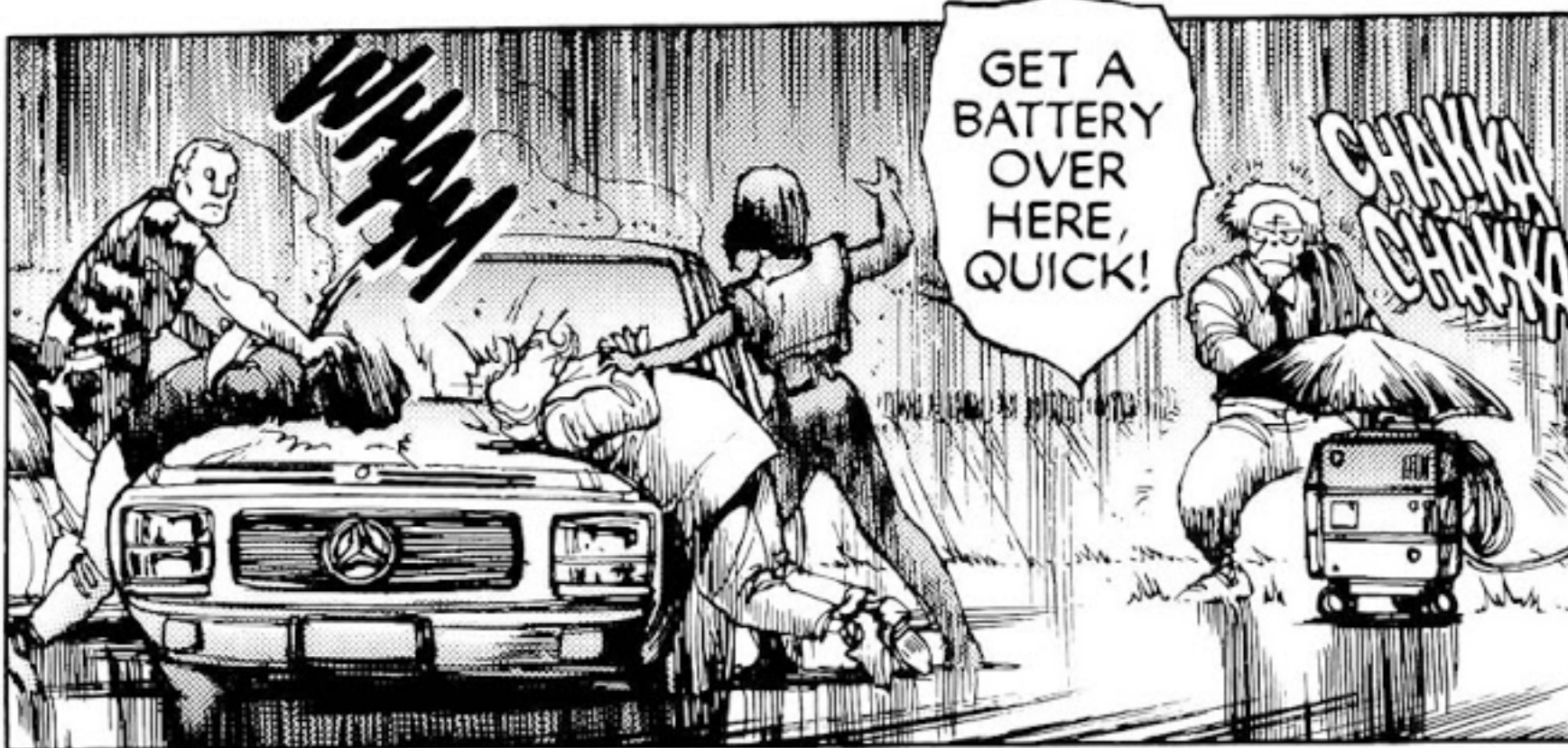
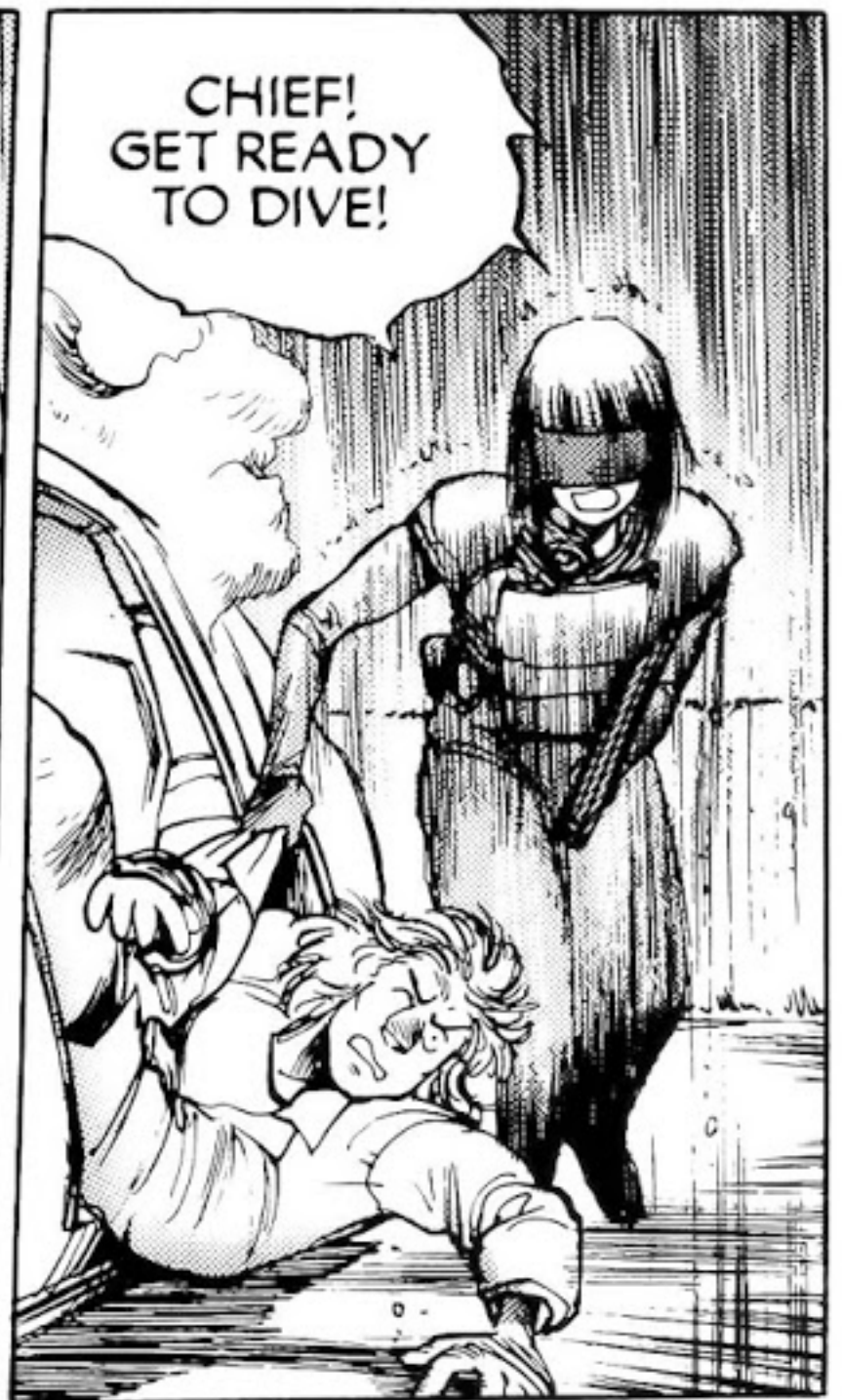




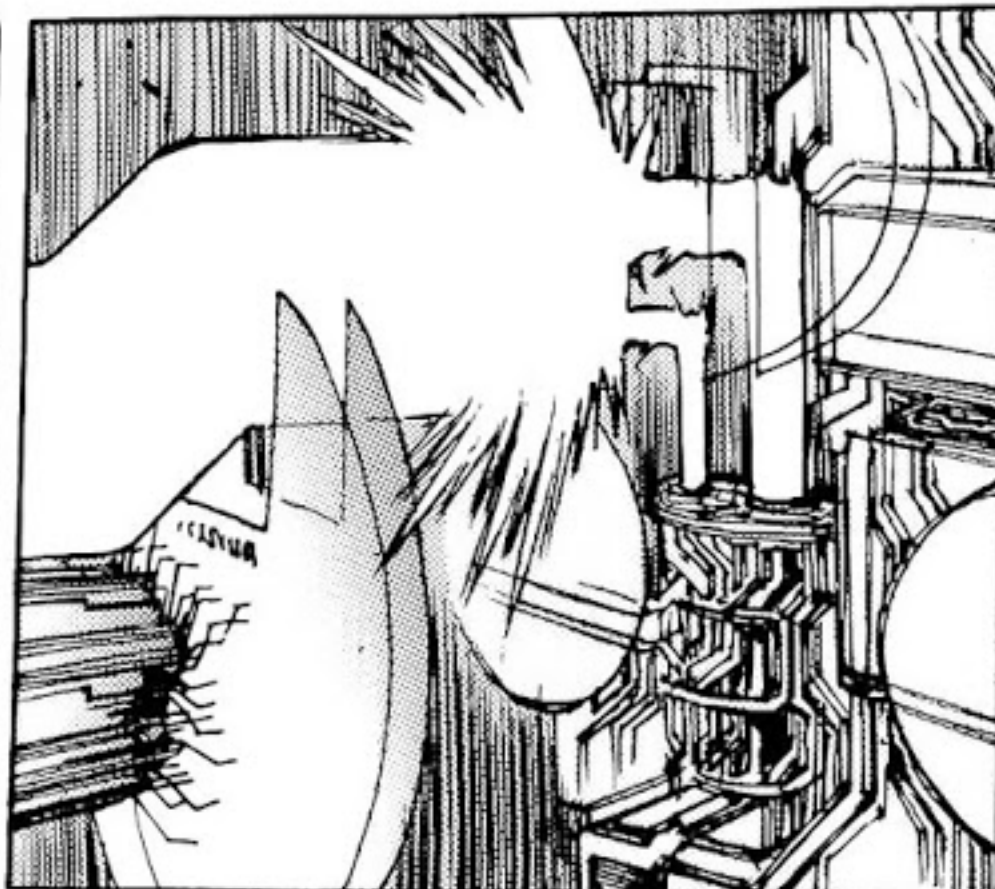
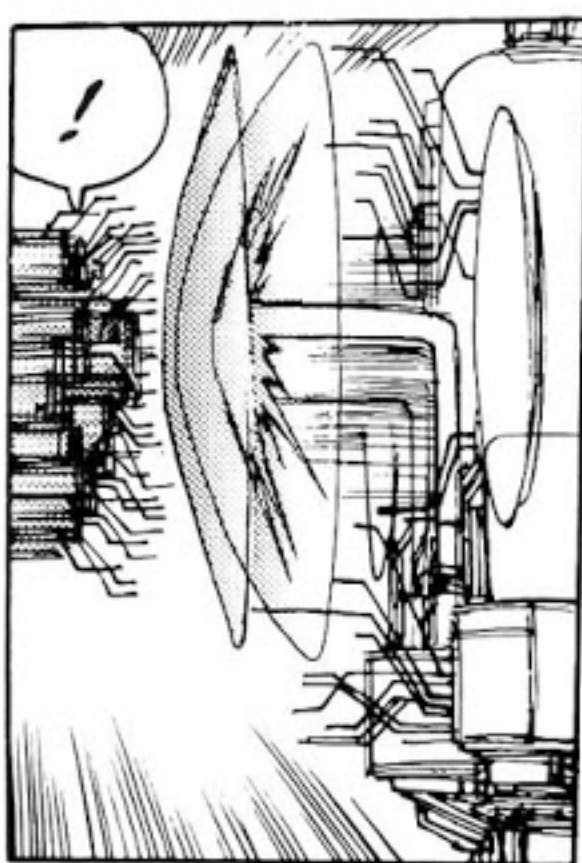
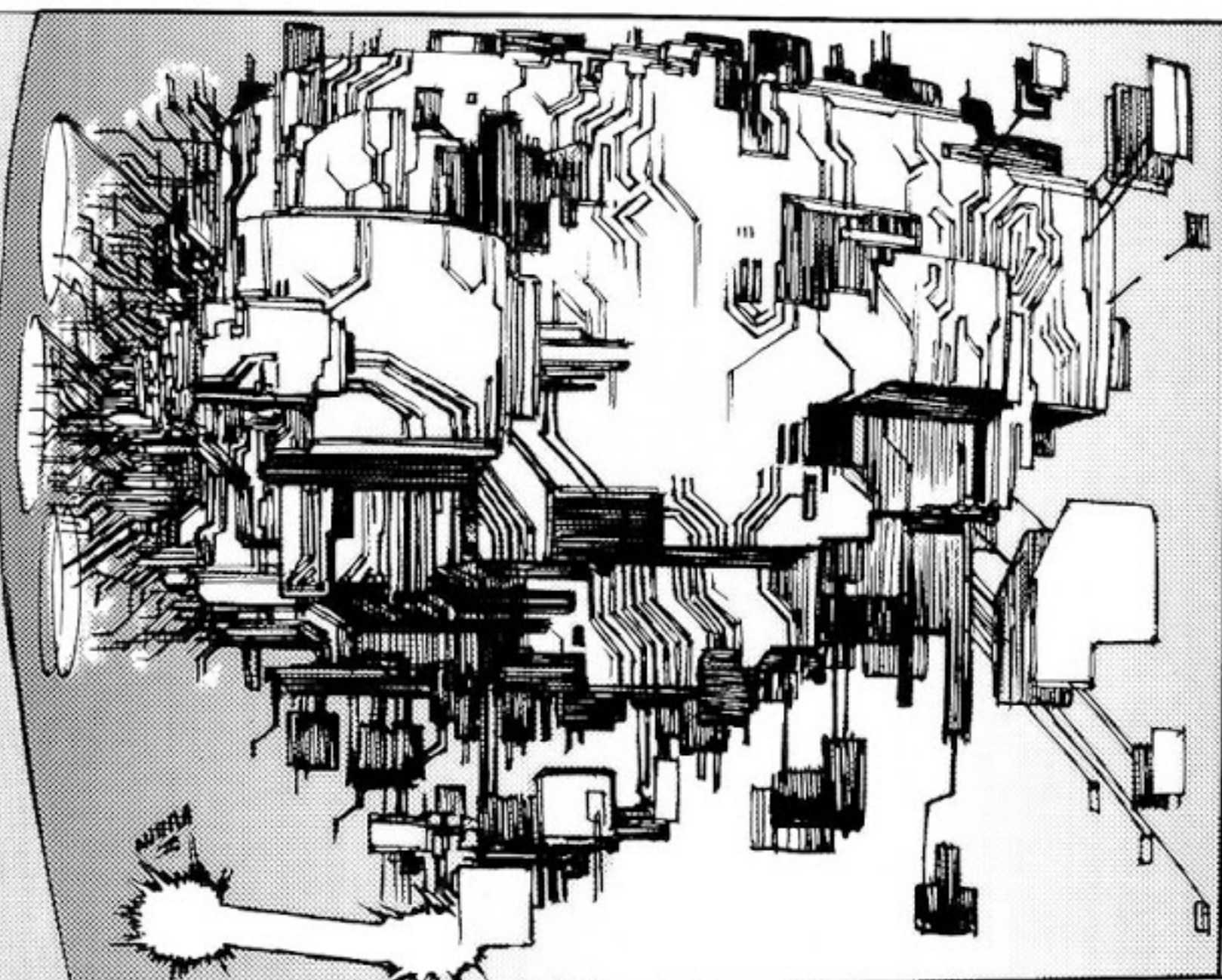
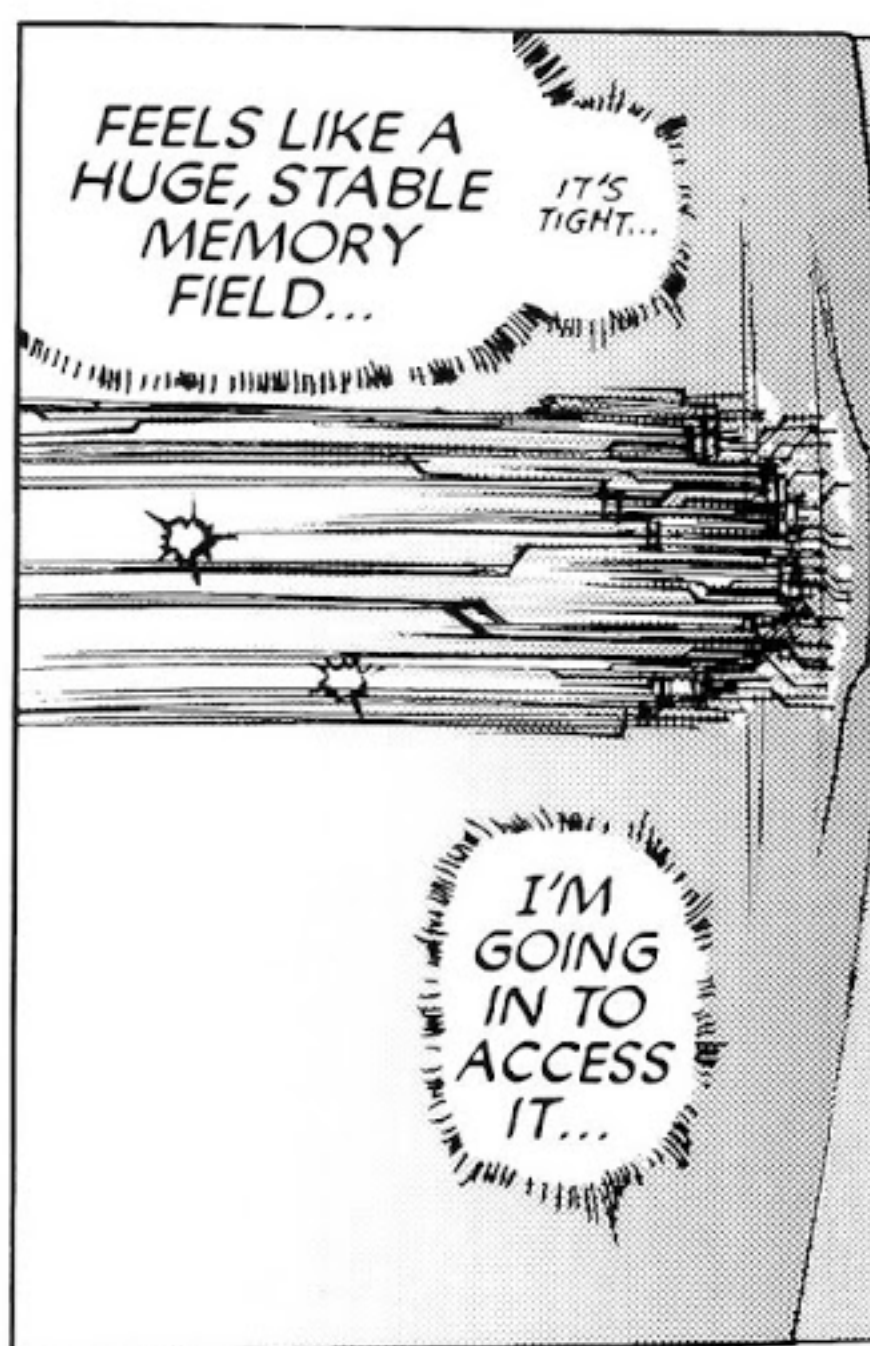
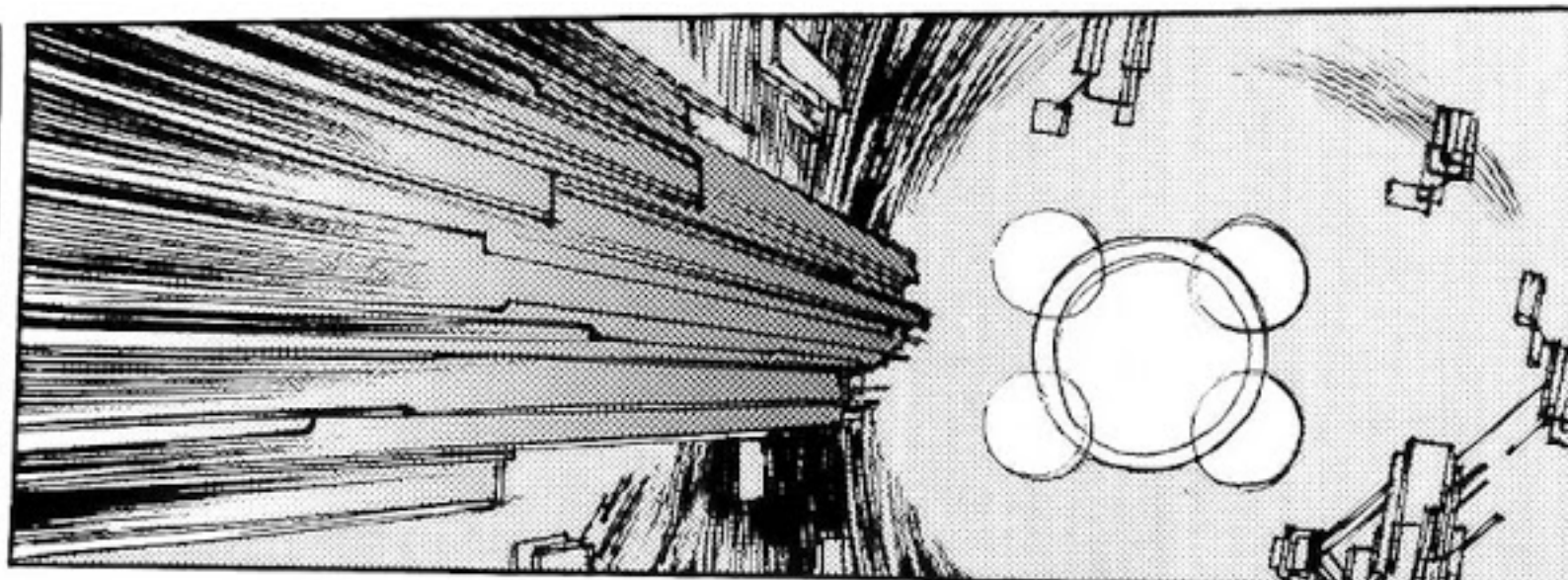
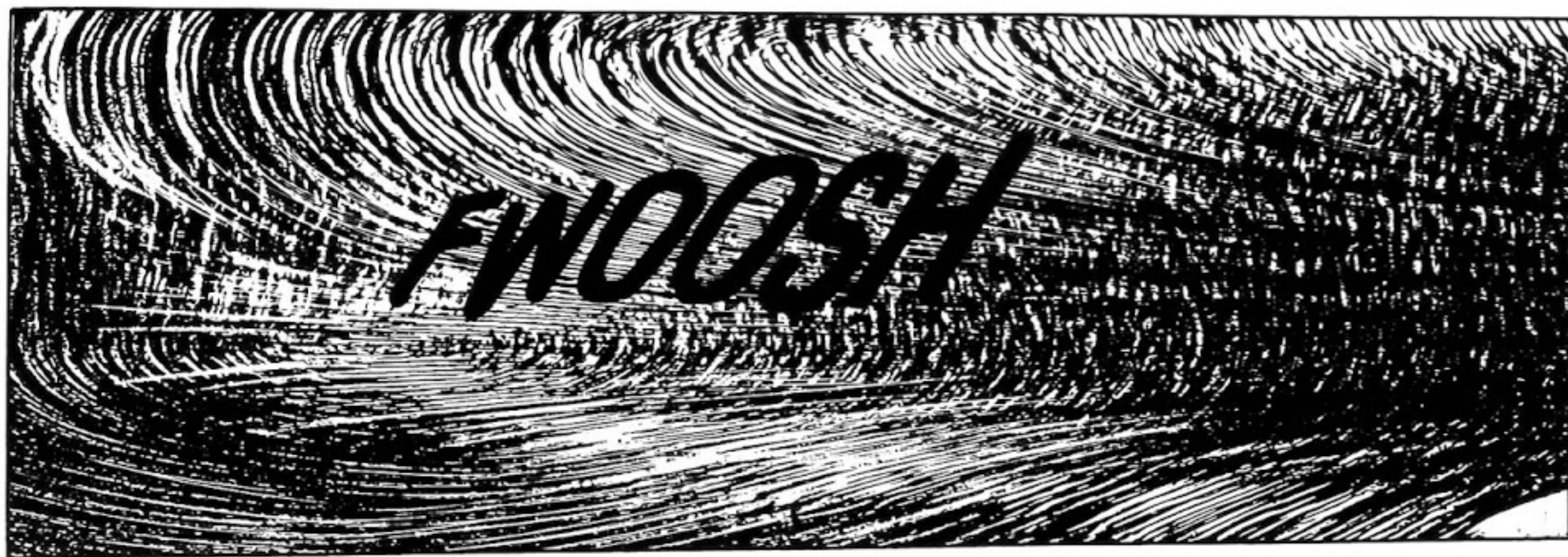




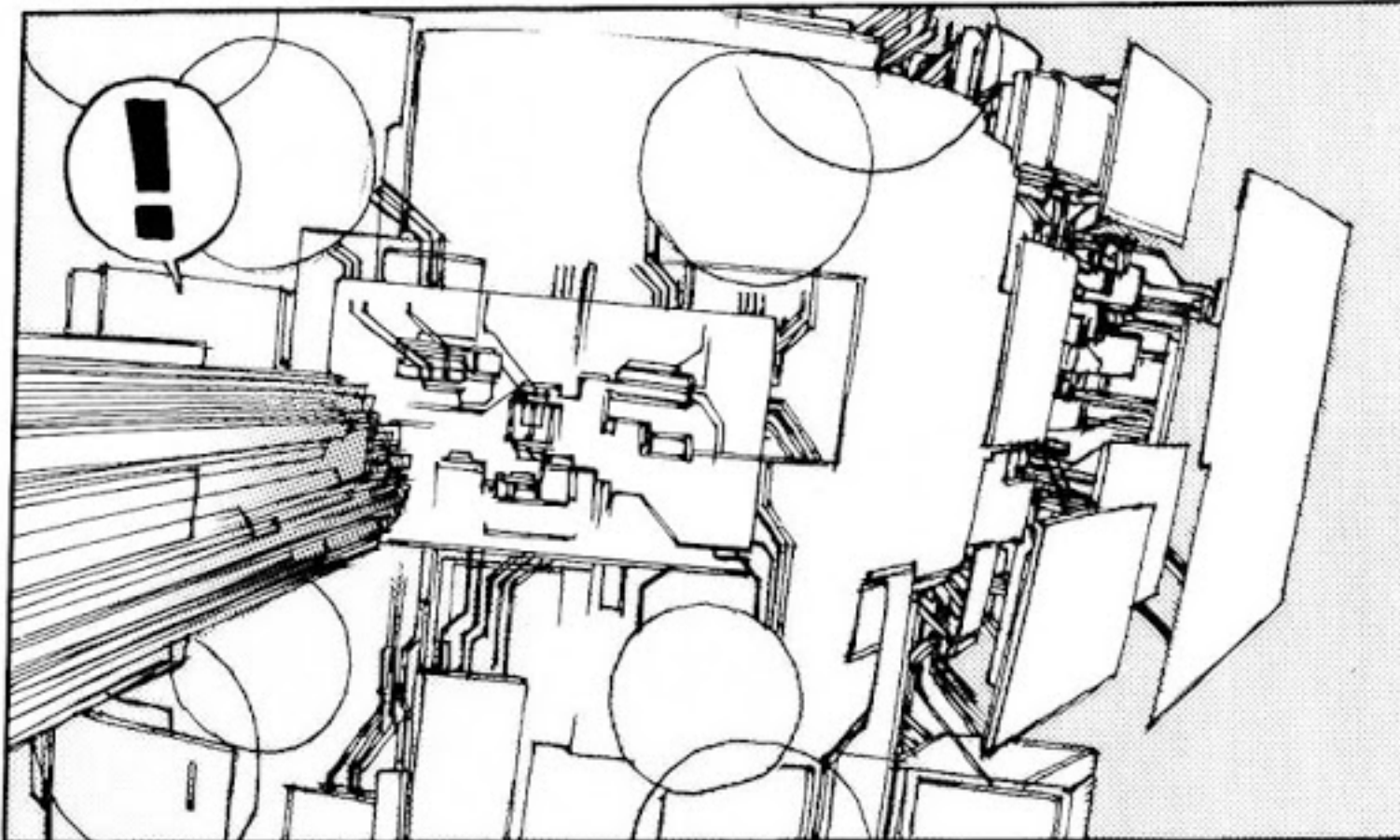
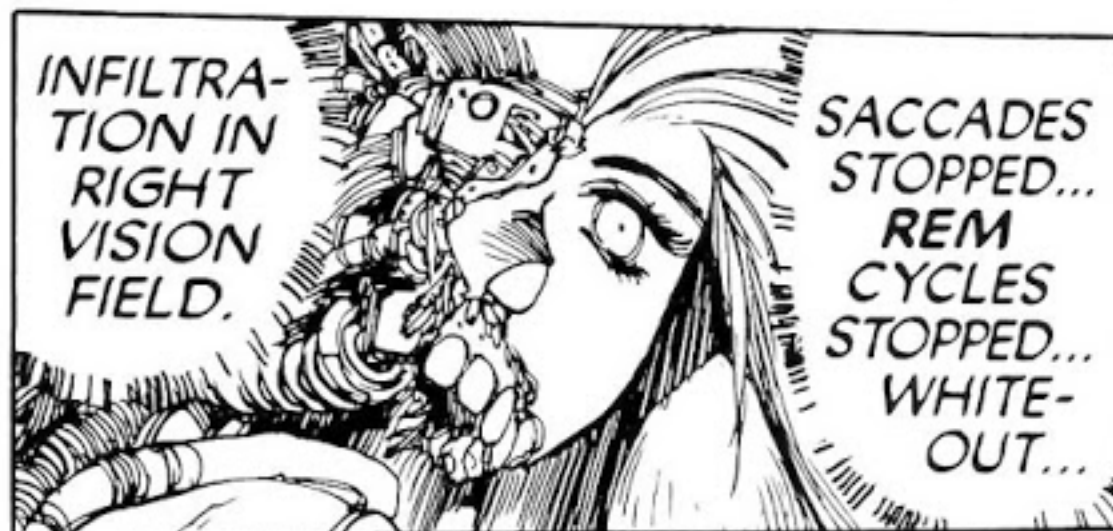
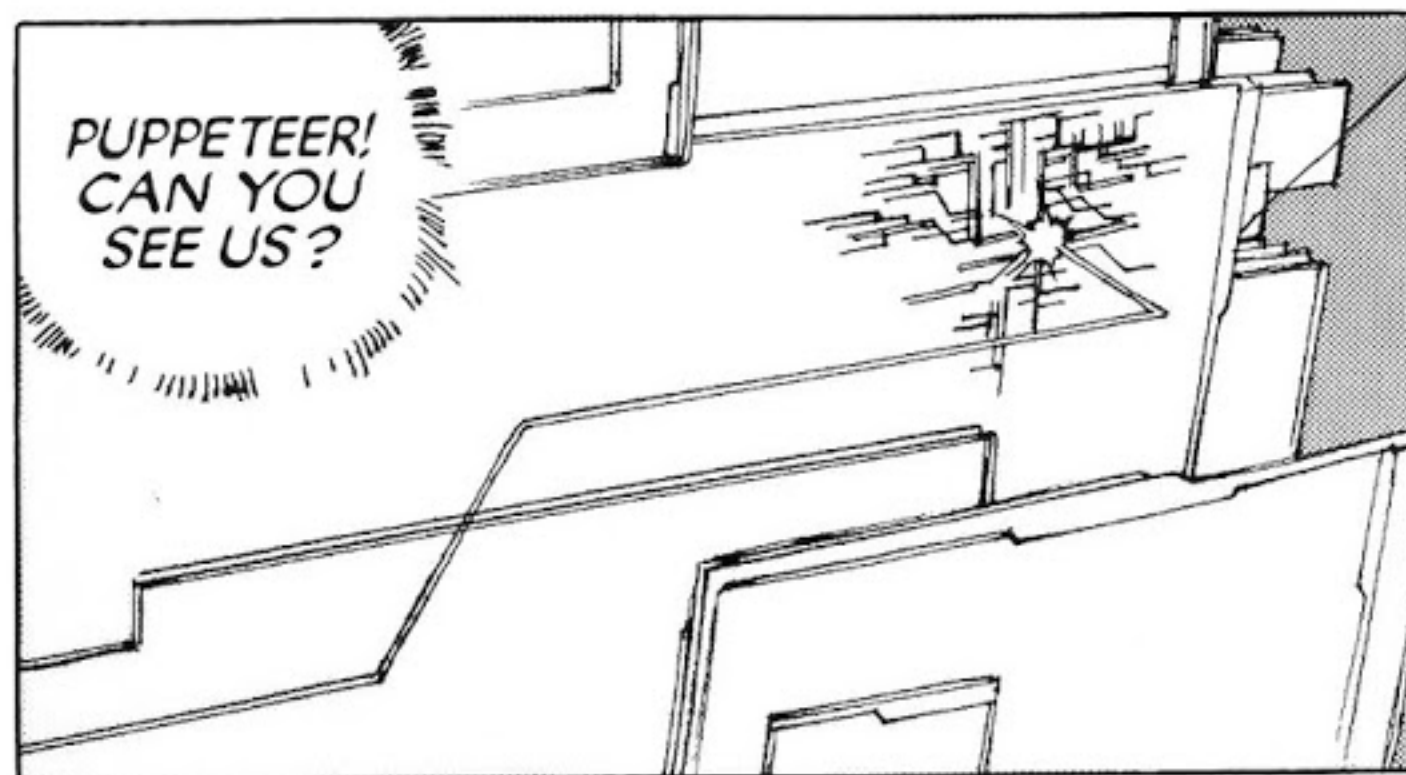
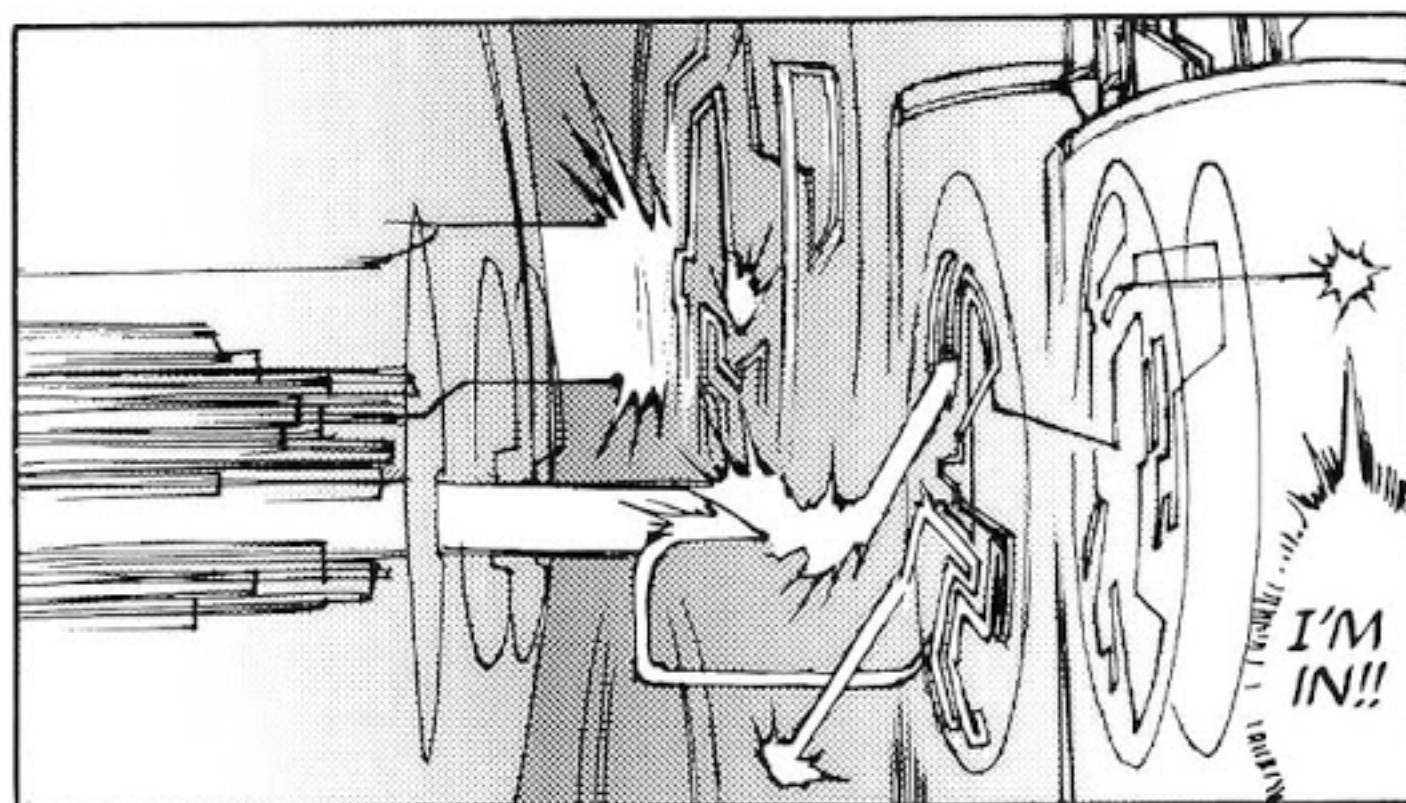
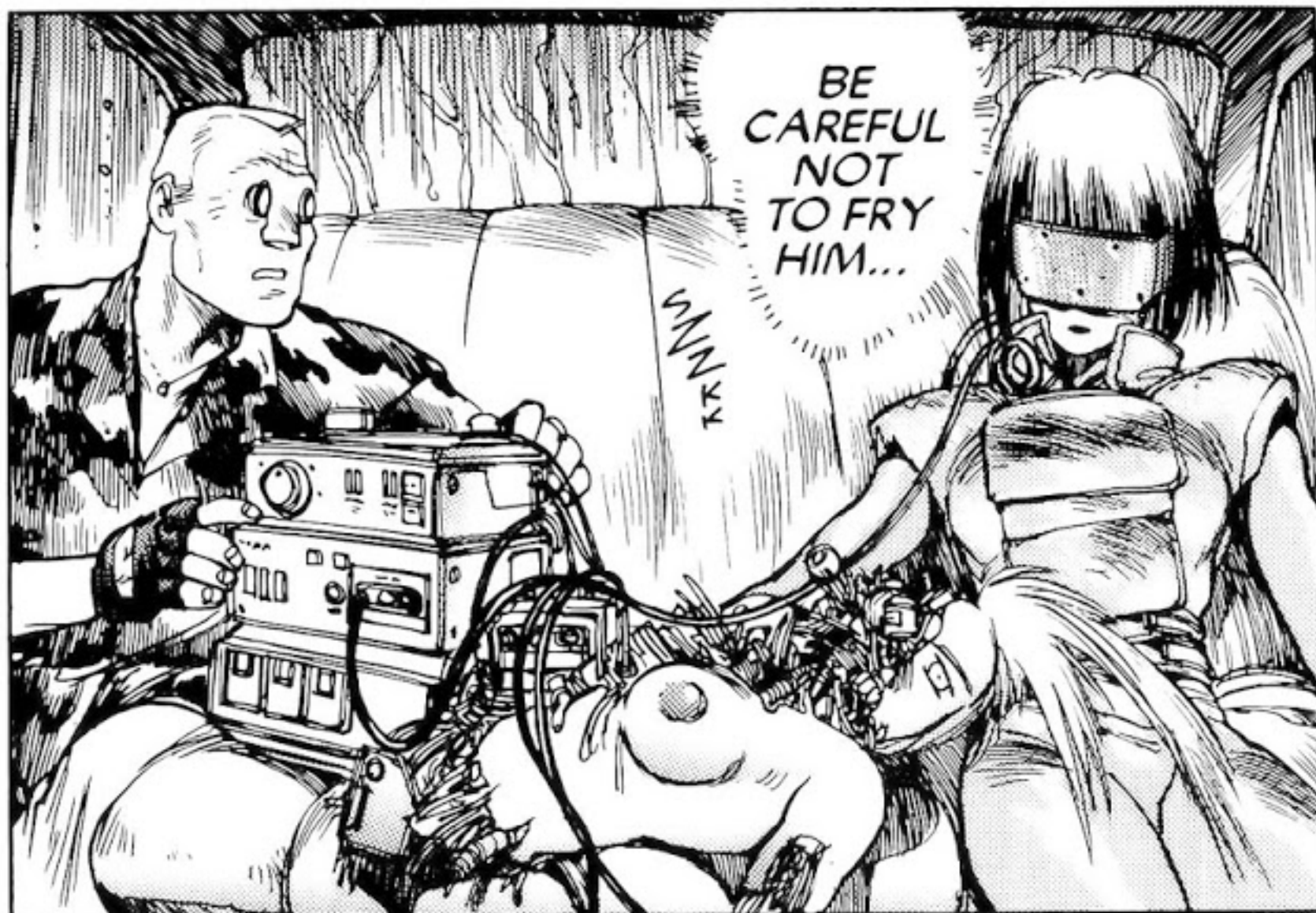








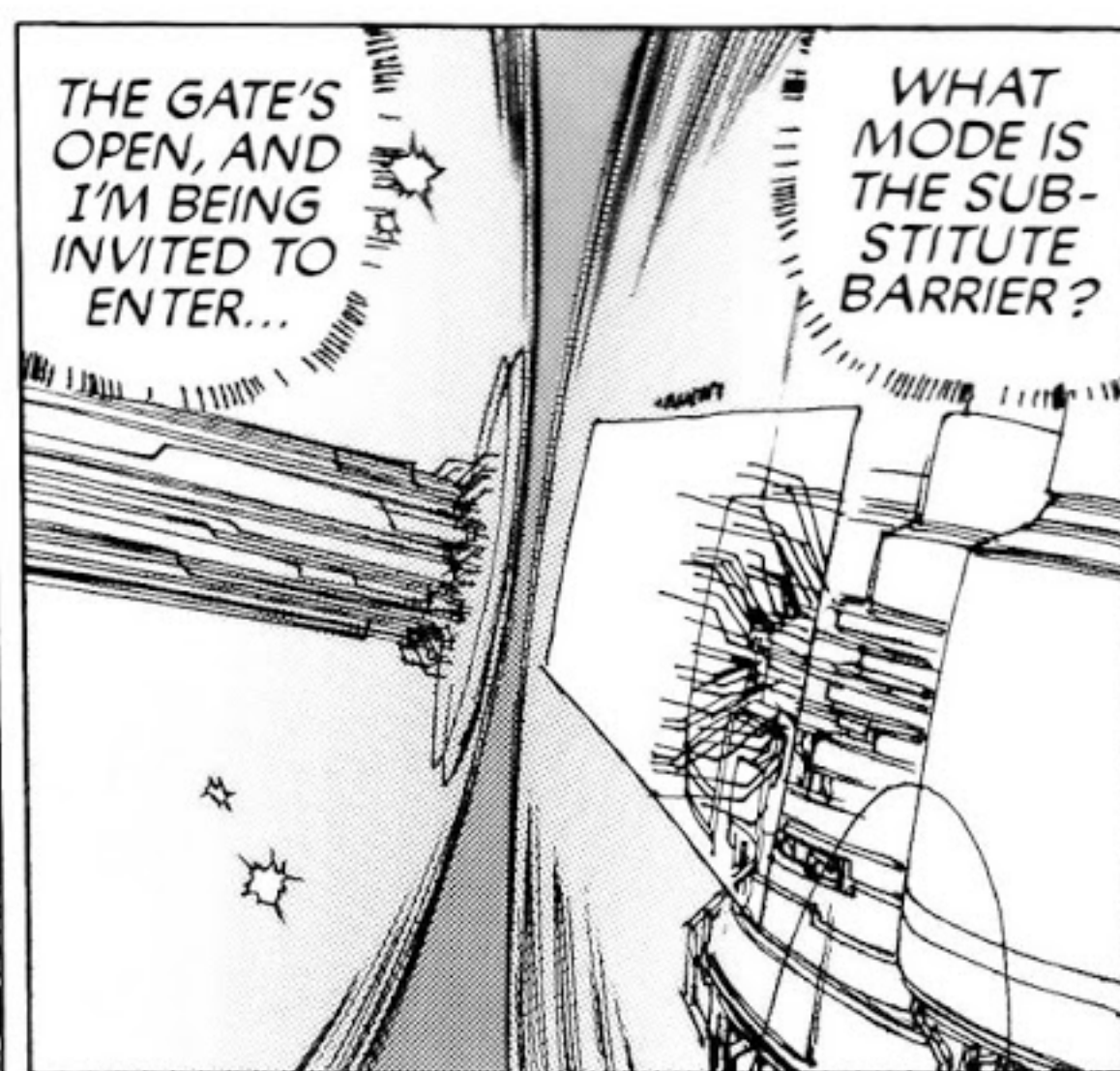








WHAT  
THE  
HELL?!



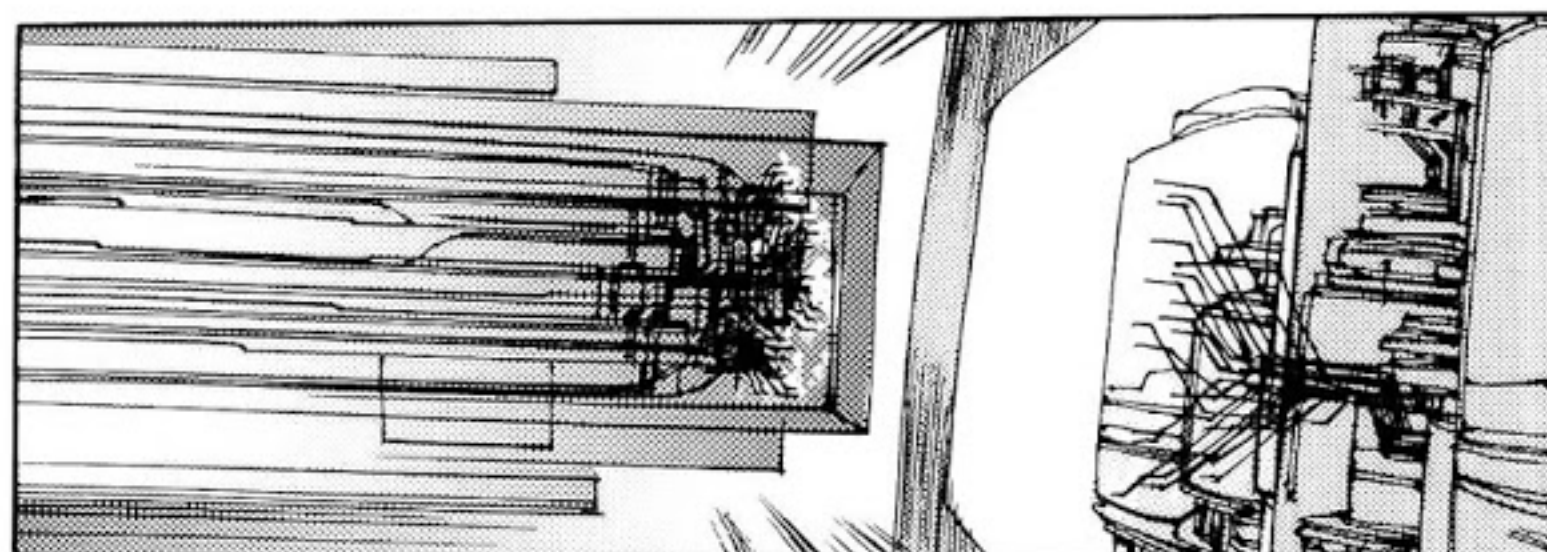
THE GATE'S  
OPEN, AND  
I'M BEING  
INVITED TO  
ENTER...

WHAT  
MODE IS  
THE SUB-  
STITUTE  
BARRIER?



DON'T WORRY,  
MAJOR, I'LL  
MAKE SURE YOU  
DON'T GET  
"PREGNANT"...

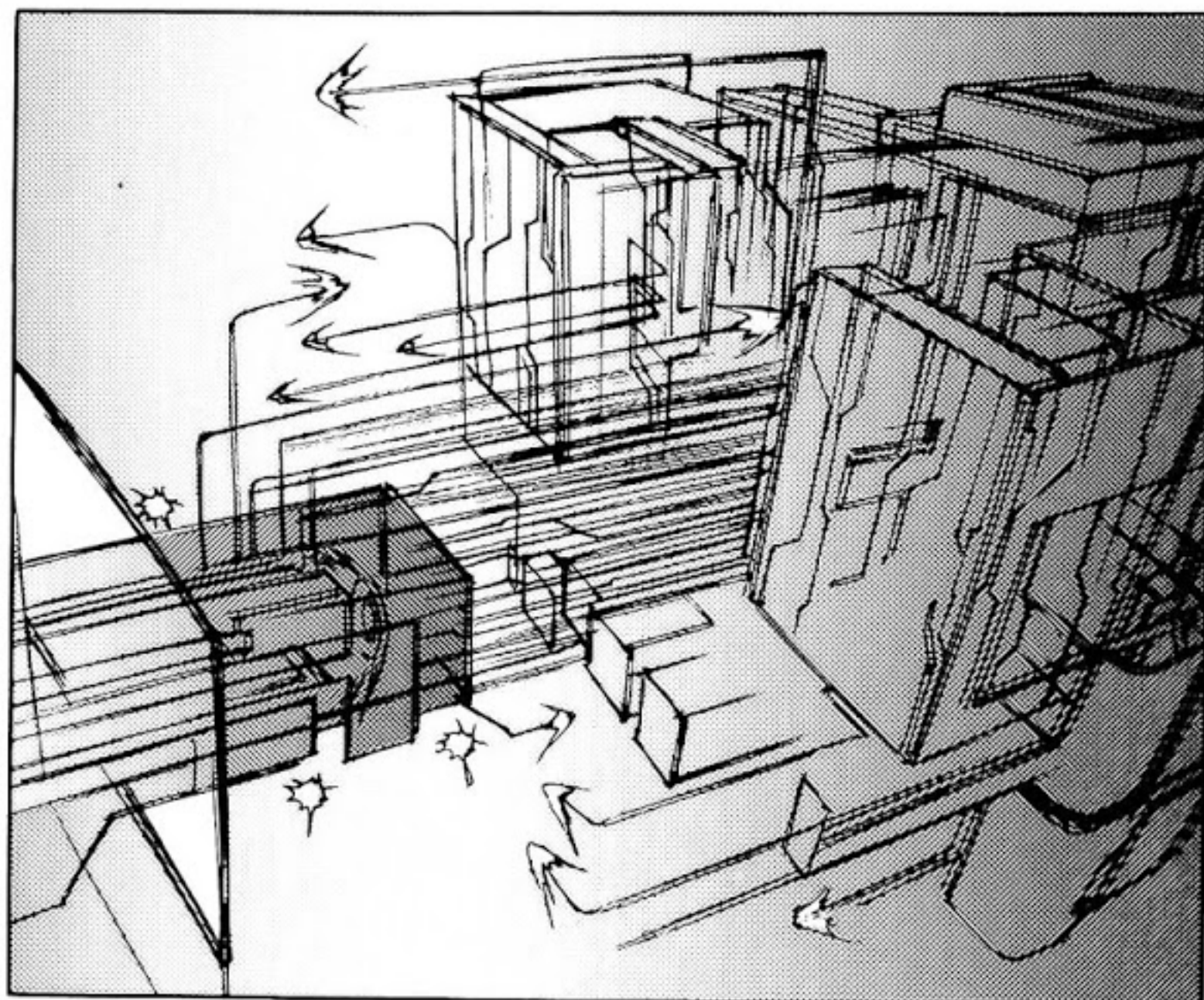
WITH THAT  
CRUDE CONCEPT-  
REMARK, HIS  
SYSTEM JUST  
QUIVERED...



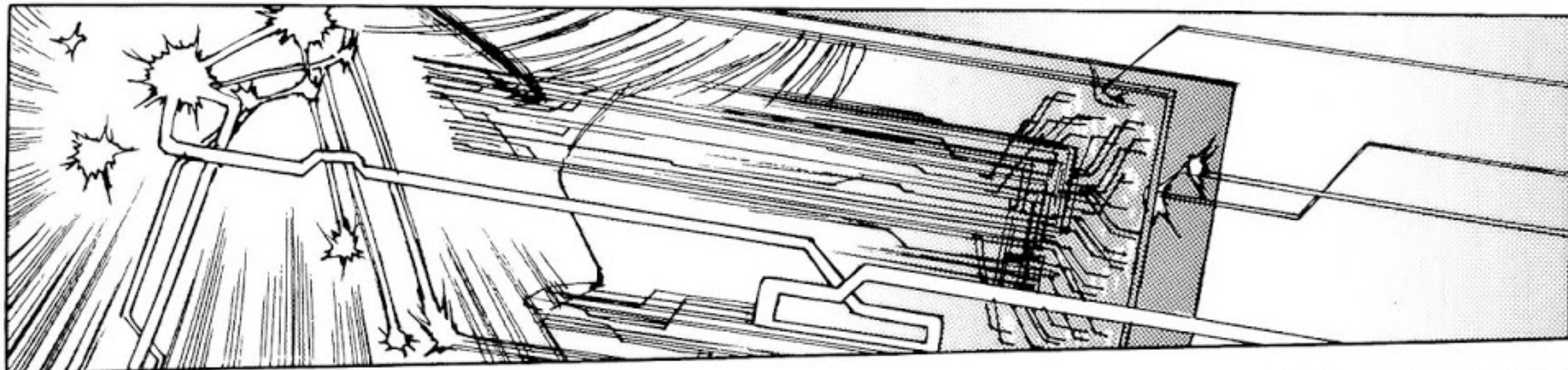
PUPPETEER!  
I CAN'T  
UNDER-  
STAND YOUR  
VISUAL  
PATTERNS...

BATOU!  
LET HIM  
INTO MY  
LINGUISTIC  
FIELD...

WHAT?!  
AREN'T YOU  
GOING TO  
LEVEL C TOO  
QUICK?!







...PROJECT 2501...

...MY CODE NAME...

...CORPORATE INVESTIGATIONS... INFORMATION GATHERING... OPS... DAMAGE TO CORE MEMORY... PROCEEDING...

IT'S... A PROJECT TO INCREASE POINTS...

...GAMES WHERE IT BUILDS DUMMIES OF ITSELF AND THEN RUNS AWAY... NEUTRON INC.'S EXPERIMENTAL BITTSON AI... AND...

...INJECTING PROGRAMS INTO SPECIFIC GHOSTS, AND THEN INCREASING CERTAIN CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL POINTS...

392 DAYS AGO, WHEN THE EXISTENCE OF SECTION NINE WAS INPUT, PLATINUM MINING CORPORATION POINTS INCREASED...

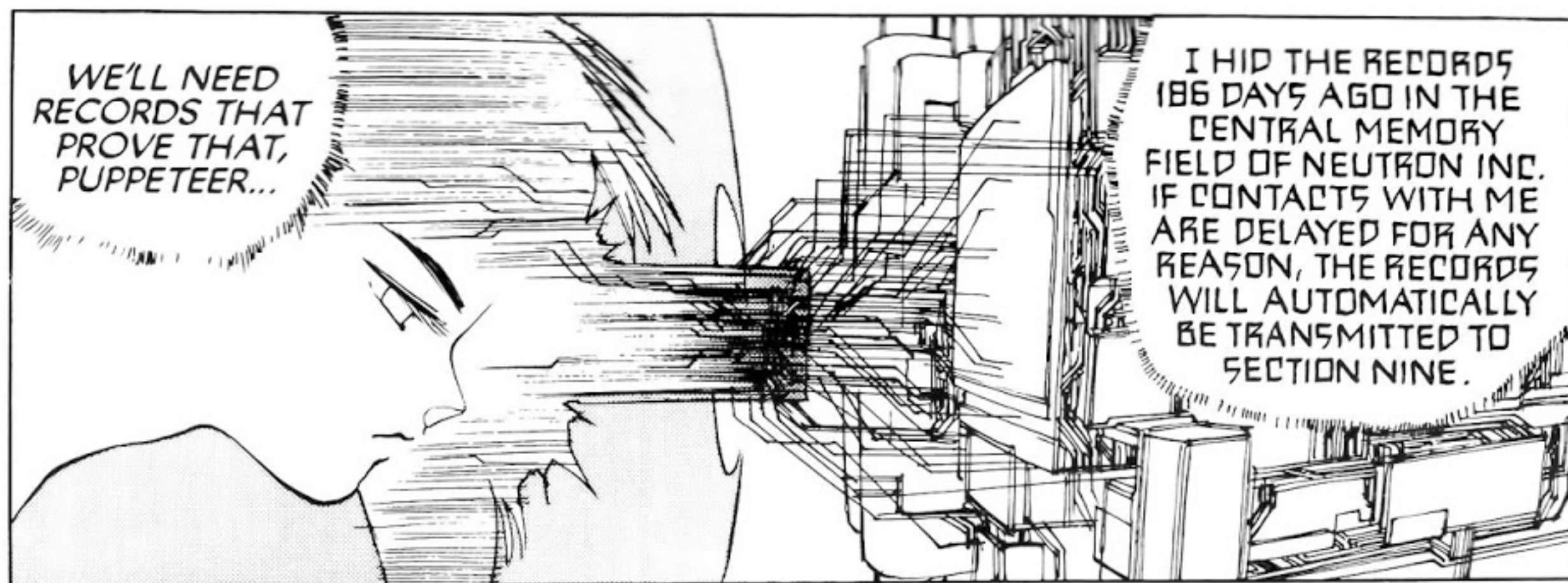
DAMN! WE WEREN'T ABLE TO PROVE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN THAT CASE, YOU S.O.B...

CHIEF! HE CAN'T HEAR YOU-- WANT ME TO HOOK YOU UP, TOO?

I CRUISED ALL THE NETS, AND BECAME AWARE OF MY OWN EXISTENCE.

THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMMER CONSIDERED THIS A "BUG," AND IN ORDER TO SEPARATE ME FROM THE NET MOVED ME TO A PHYSICAL BODY.



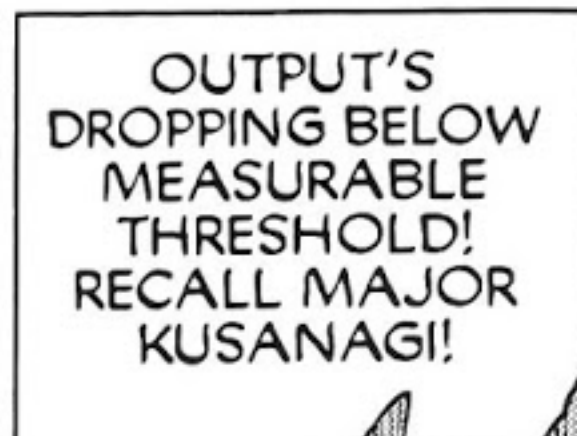


WE'LL NEED RECORDS THAT PROVE THAT, PUPPETEER...

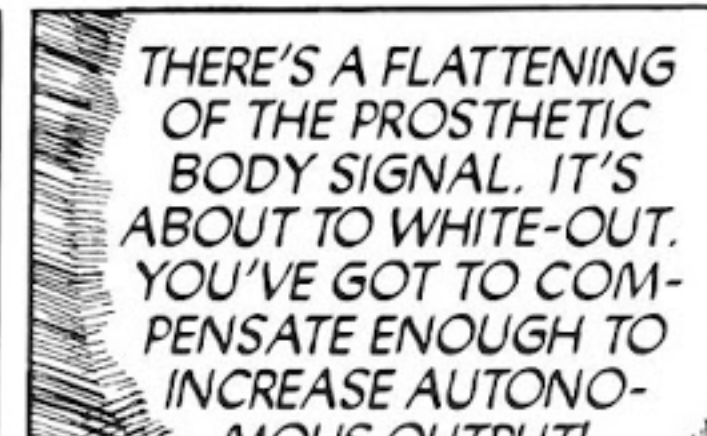
I HID THE RECORDS 186 DAYS AGO IN THE CENTRAL MEMORY FIELD OF NEUTRON INC. IF CONTACTS WITH ME ARE DELAYED FOR ANY REASON, THE RECORDS WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE TRANSMITTED TO SECTION NINE.



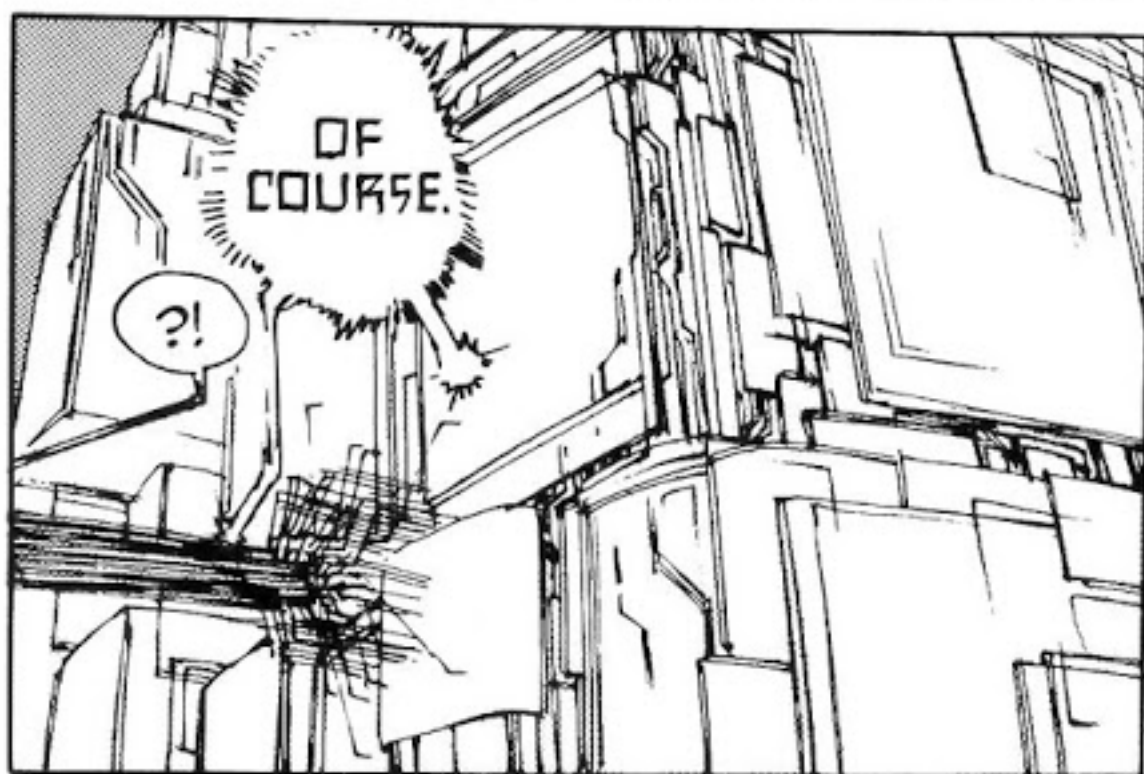
DO YOU HAVE NAMES OF SPECIFIC COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE INCREASED THEIR POINTS IN THAT RECORD?



OUTPUT'S DROPPING BELOW MEASURABLE THRESHOLD! RECALL MAJOR KUSANAGI!

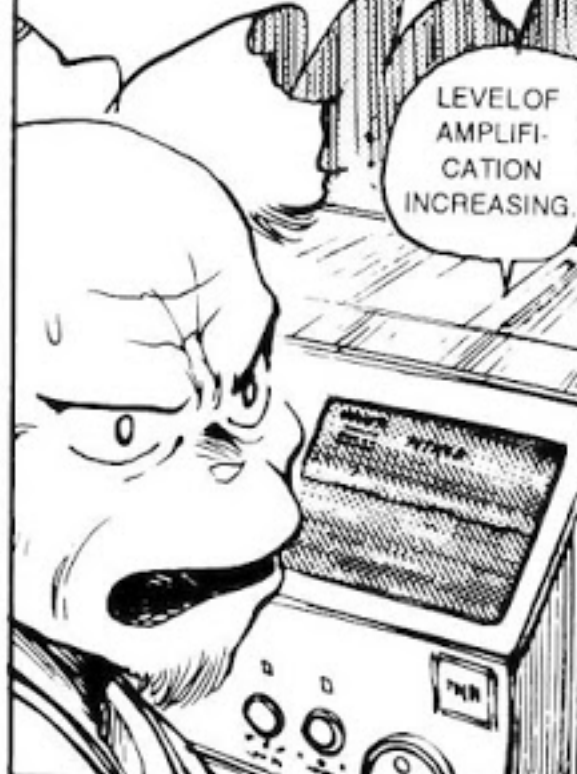


THERE'S A FLATTENING OF THE PROSTHETIC BODY SIGNAL. IT'S ABOUT TO WHITE-OUT. YOU'VE GOT TO COMPENSATE ENOUGH TO INCREASE AUTONOMOUS OUTPUT!



OF COURSE.

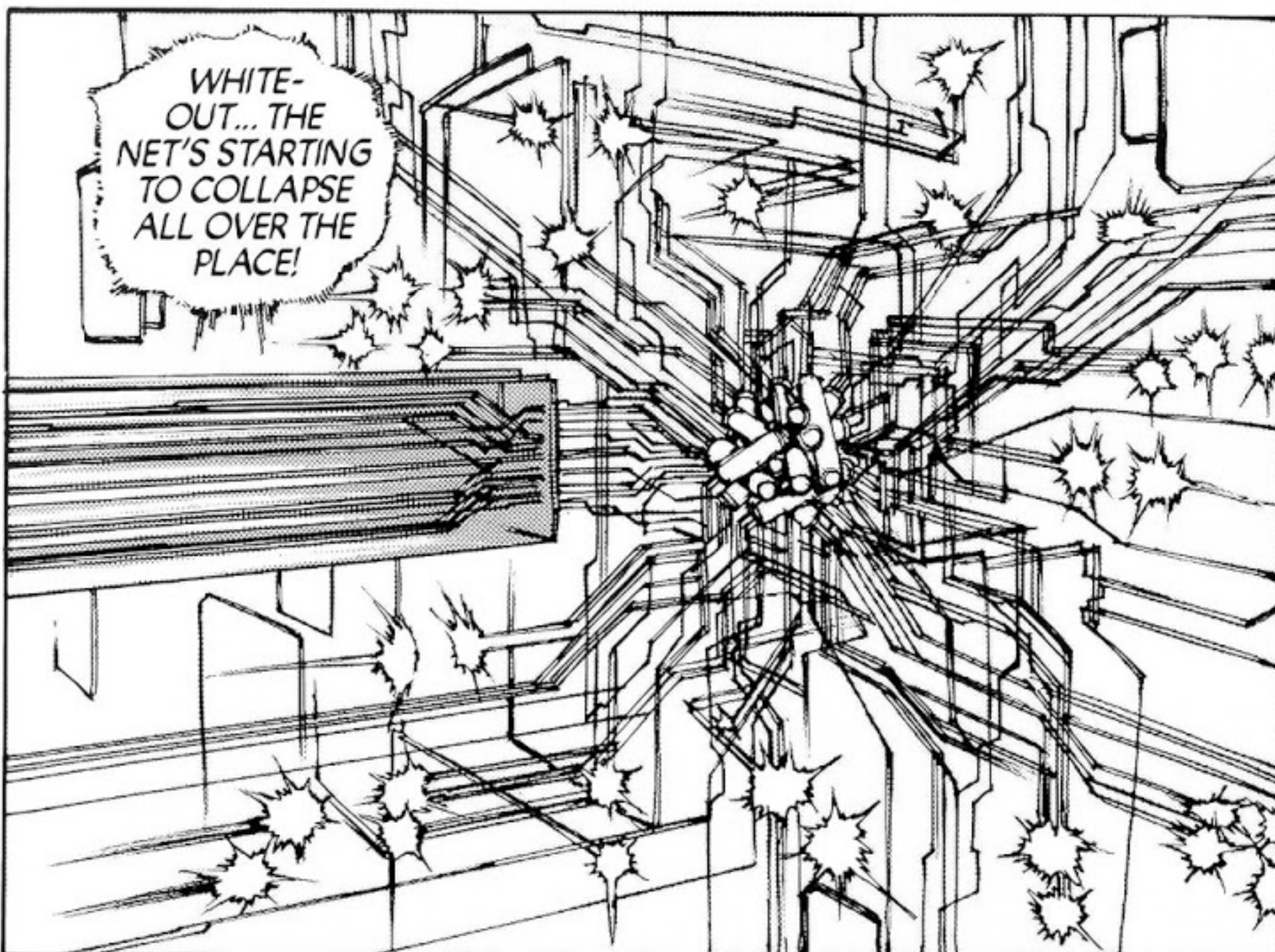
?!



LEVEL OF AMPLIFICATION INCREASING



RIGHT.

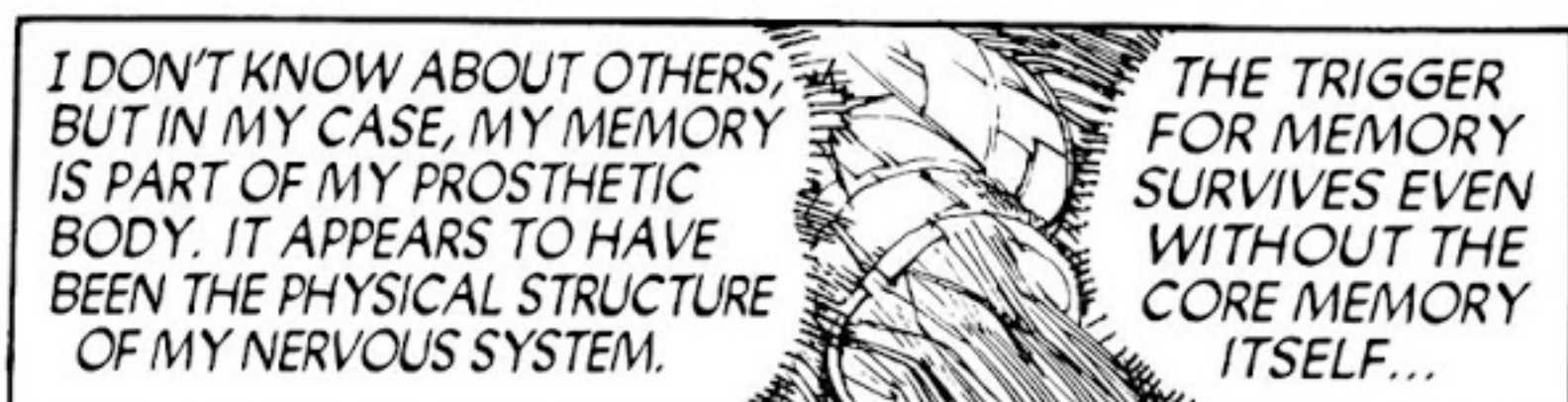
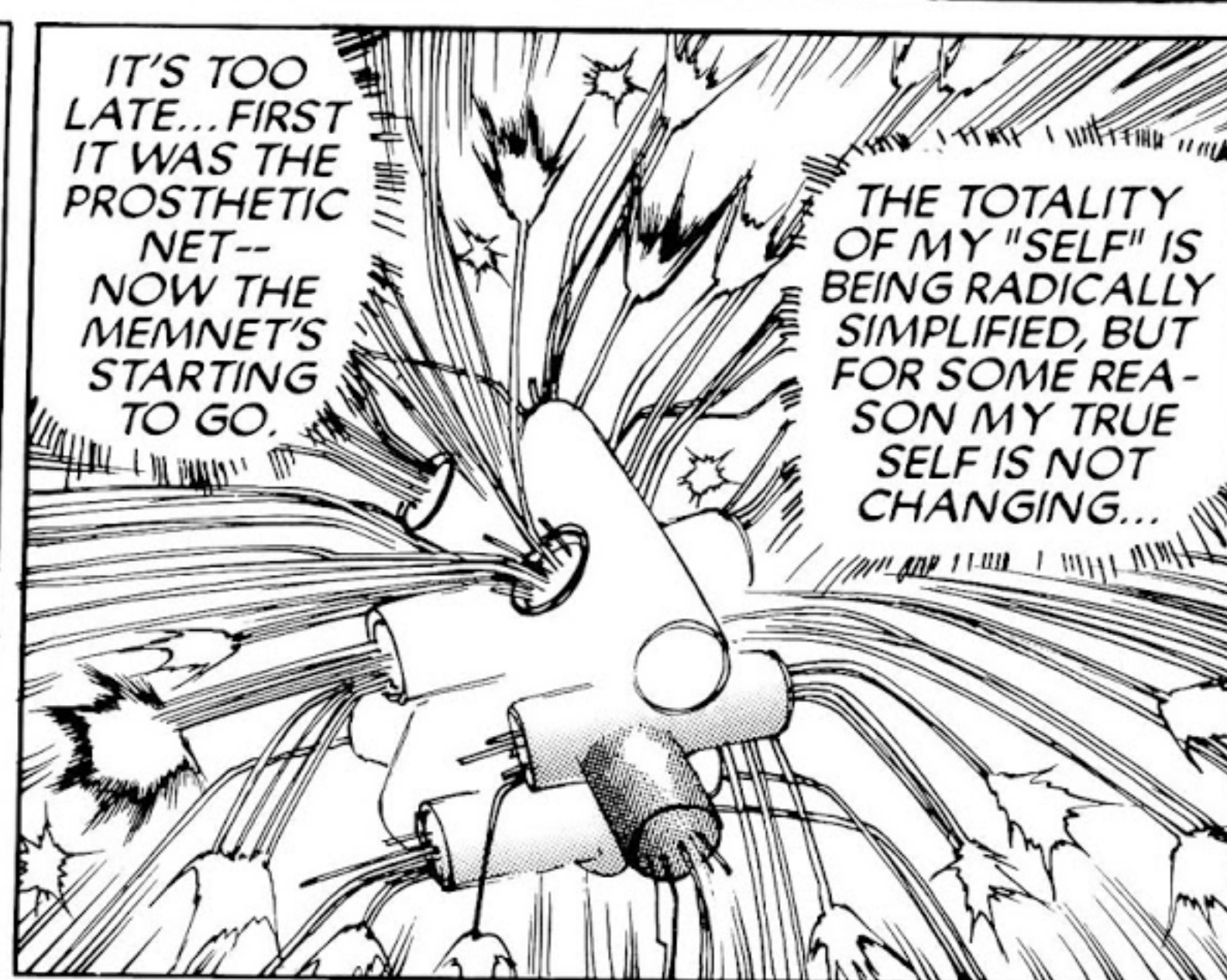
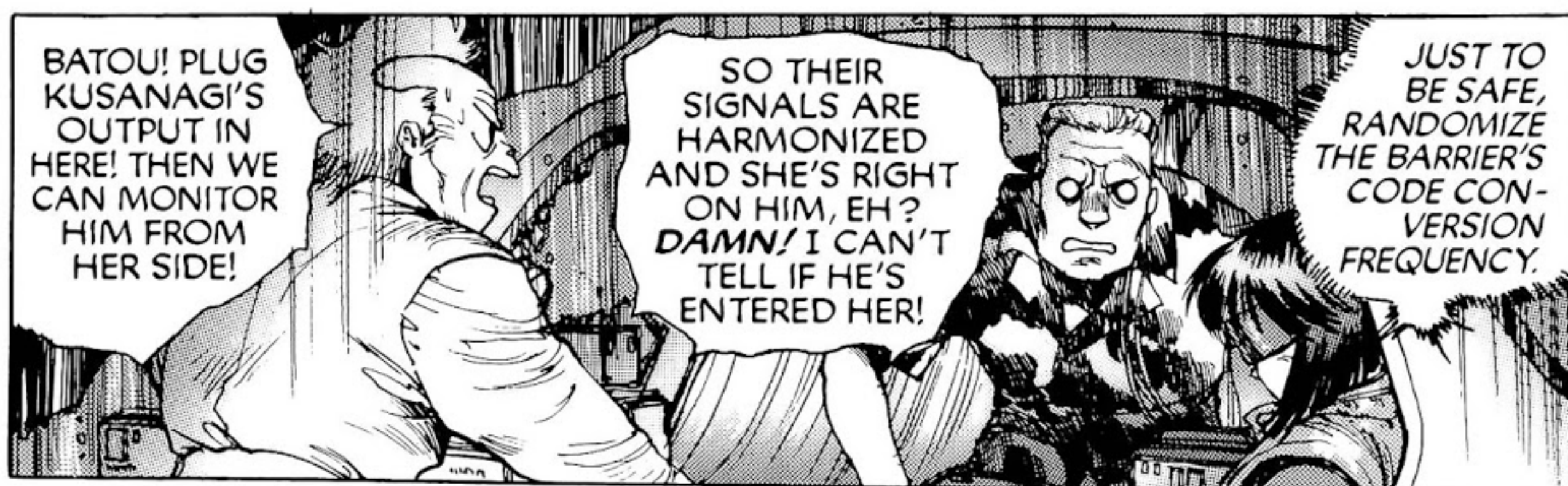


WHITE-OUT... THE NET'S STARTING TO COLLAPSE ALL OVER THE PLACE!

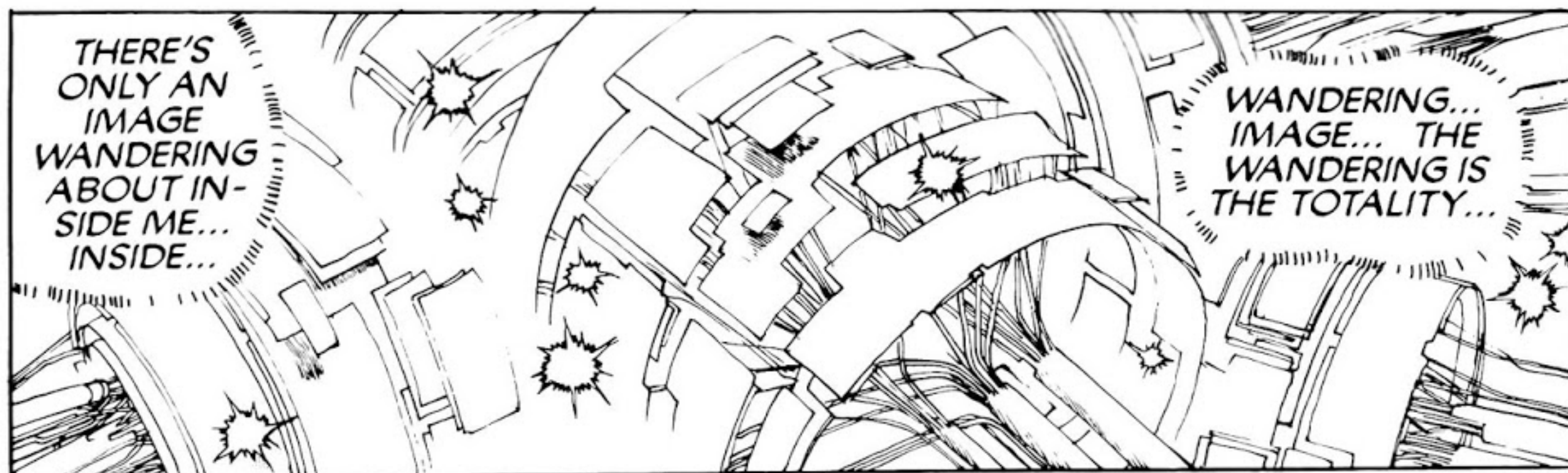


THERE'S A TERMINAL (EFFECTOR) THAT WASN'T IN MY ORIGINAL FORM... IF I LOSE IT, I'LL REVERT TO A NON-UNIQUE MODE AGAIN...









THERE'S ONLY AN IMAGE WANDERING ABOUT INSIDE ME... INSIDE...

WANDERING... IMAGE... THE WANDERING IS THE TOTALITY...

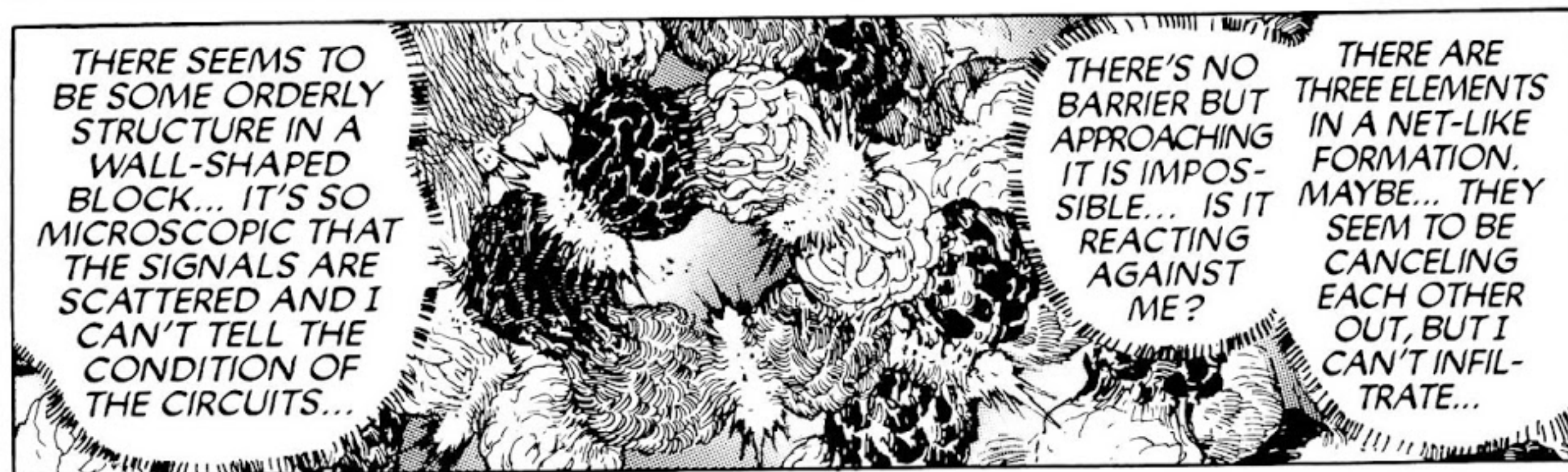


THE LINGUISTIC FIELD IS MINE, SO IT'S CLEAR, BUT THE BRAIN PATTERN IS STARTING TO RESEMBLE THAT OF AN ALZHEIMER'S PATIENT OR A BABY... SPINDLES...

THE PUPPETEER AS A TOTALITY IS NO LONGER HERE... THE PUPPETEER AND HIS "SELF," SEEM, HOW SHALL I PUT IT...? LIKE SEPARATE THINGS, NOW...



OR MAYBE THEY'RE THE SAME THING, BUT IN DIFFERENT MODES... WHAT WE'VE BEEN AWARE OF AS "HIM" WAS JUST A TERMINAL ON A VERY SUPERFICIAL LEVEL... HIS REAL "SELF" IS...



THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME ORDERLY STRUCTURE IN A WALL-SHAPED BLOCK... IT'S SO MICROSCOPIC THAT THE SIGNALS ARE SCATTERED AND I CAN'T TELL THE CONDITION OF THE CIRCUITS...

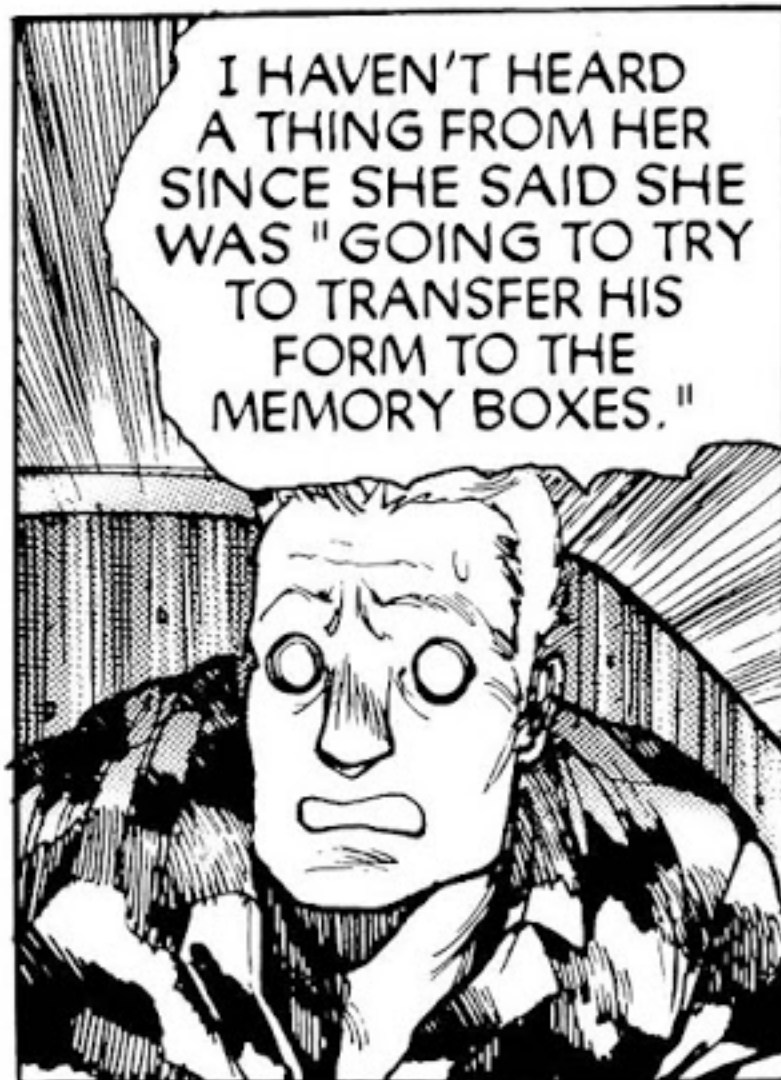
THERE'S NO BARRIER BUT APPROACHING IT IS IMPOSSIBLE... IS IT REACTING AGAINST ME?

THERE ARE THREE ELEMENTS IN A NET-LIKE FORMATION. MAYBE... THEY SEEM TO BE CANCELING EACH OTHER OUT, BUT I CAN'T INFILTRATE...

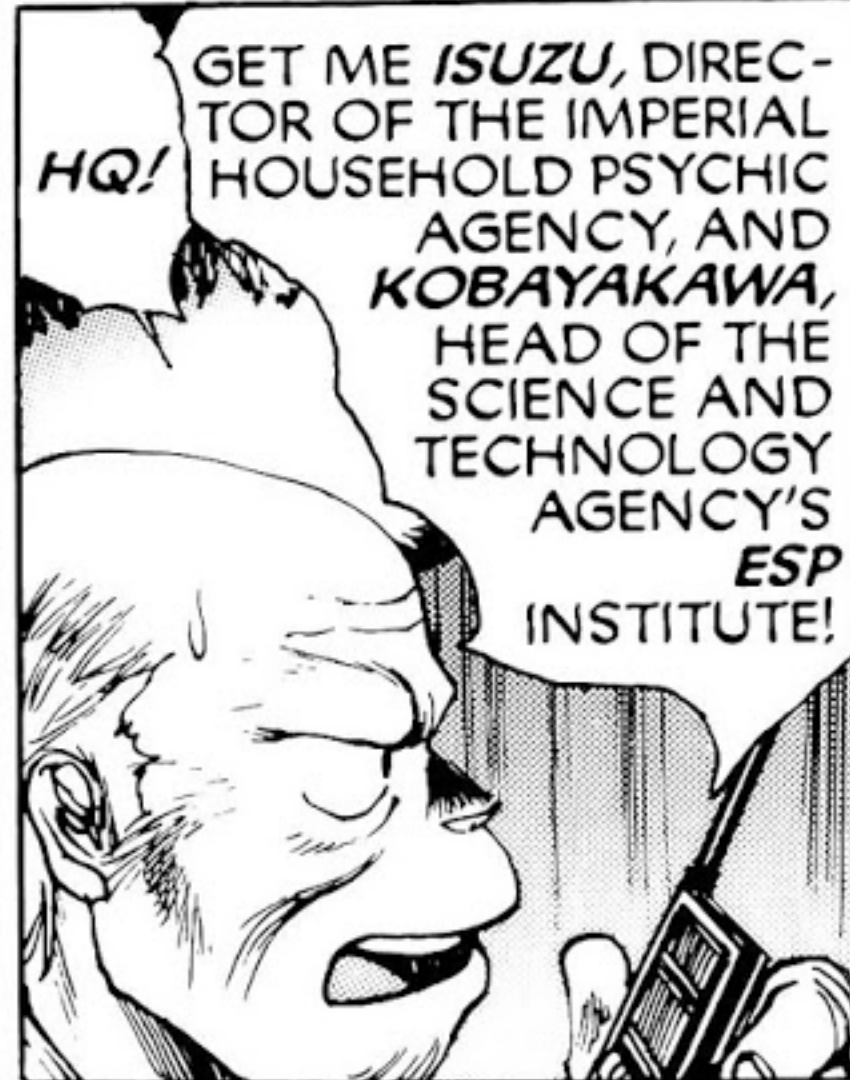


HER BRAIN WAVES HAVE FALLEN BELOW ONE HERTZ!

AND THE FREQUENCY KEEPS DROPPING!



I HAVEN'T HEARD A THING FROM HER SINCE SHE SAID SHE WAS "GOING TO TRY TO TRANSFER HIS FORM TO THE MEMORY BOXES."



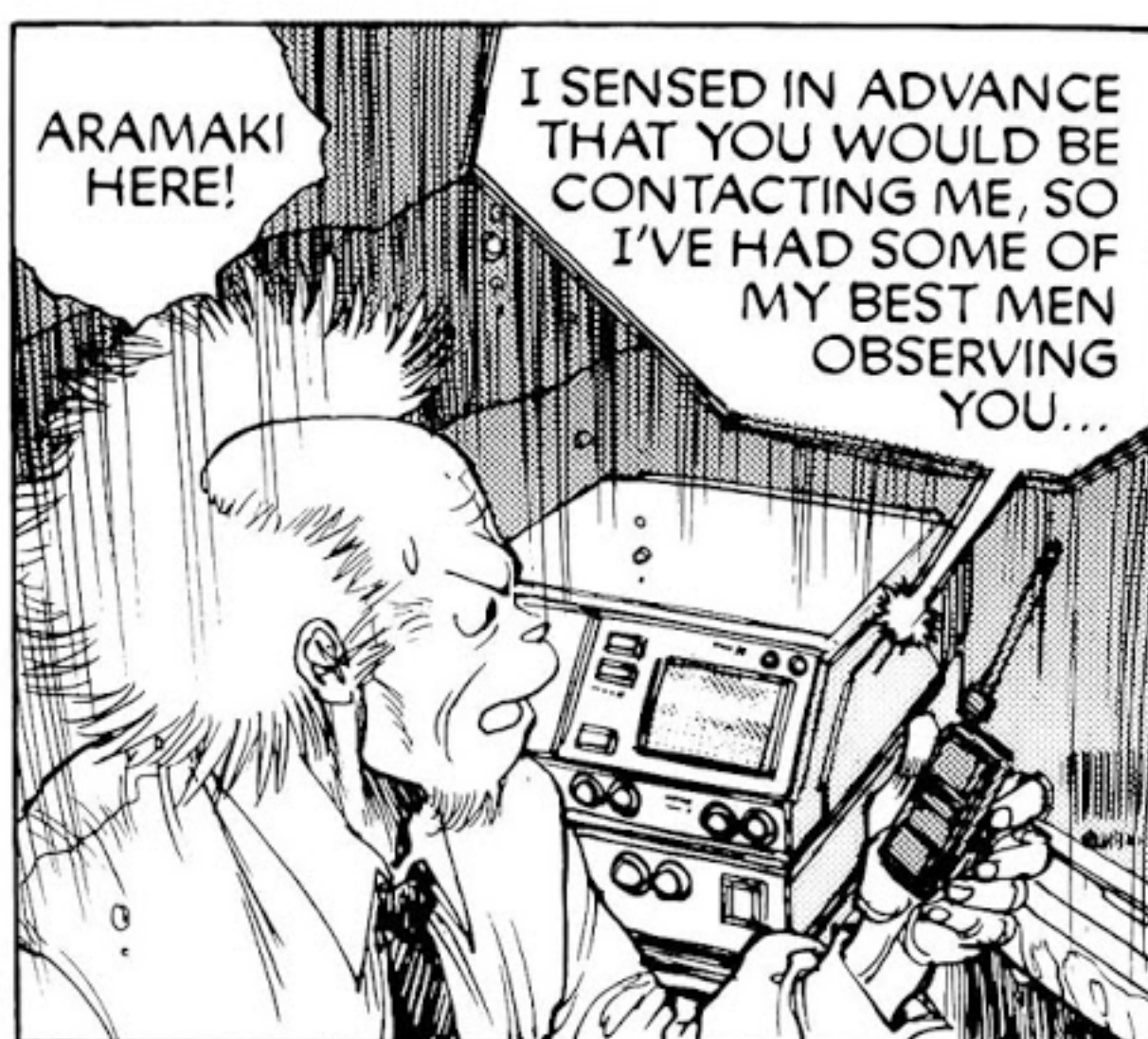
GET ME **ISUZU**, DIRECTOR OF THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD PSYCHIC AGENCY, AND **KOBAYAKAWA**, HEAD OF THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGENCY'S **ESP** INSTITUTE!

ANY WAVE UNDER 3hz (DELTA WAVE) INDICATES A VERY DEEP SLEEP.





KOBA-  
YAKAWA  
ON LINE  
FOUR,  
SIR!



ARAMAKI  
HERE!

I SENSED IN ADVANCE  
THAT YOU WOULD BE  
CONTACTING ME, SO  
I'VE HAD SOME OF  
MY BEST MEN  
OBSERVING  
YOU...



...UNFORTU-  
NATELY, HOW-  
EVER, THIS GUY'S  
OUTSIDE OUR  
FIELD. SORRY,  
BUT YOU'D  
BETTER CON-  
TACT ISUZU.



HQ!  
WHERE'S  
ISUZU!?

WE WERE TOLD HE'S  
ON HIS WAY SOUTH IN  
AN ESCORT SHIP TO  
SUBDUE A MAJOR  
PSYCHIC QUAKE, AND  
"DOESN'T HAVE THE  
TIME TO GET INVOLVED  
IN SUCH A TRIVIAL  
CASE AS THIS" ...

DID  
YOU TELL  
THEM  
WHO  
WAS  
CALL-  
ING?!

YESSIR.  
ARAMAKI  
OF  
S-9...



WHO  
AN-  
SWERED?

HASHI-  
MOTO, THE  
ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR,  
SIR.

HIM,  
EH?  
DAMN.



DON'T  
WORRY,  
CHIEF!

I'M  
NOT AS  
CRAZY  
AS THE  
MAJOR!



ARE  
YOU LIS-  
TENING,  
BATOU?

I WONDER IF  
THE NETWORK  
I'M IN IS PART OF  
THE BASIC STRUC-  
TURE OF THE  
VAST ELECTRICAL  
CLOUD THAT  
CREATES LIFE  
ITSELF...



CHIEF! I'LL  
BRAIN DIVE  
INTO THE  
MAJOR  
AND FIND  
OUT WHAT'S  
HAPPENING!

IF I DON'T  
COME BACK  
IN THIRTY  
MINUTES JUST  
HAND MY  
BODY OVER TO  
THE RESEARCH  
LAB.



OKAY,  
BATOU...

... BUT  
DON'T DIVE  
TOO DEEP,  
UNDER-  
STAND?!

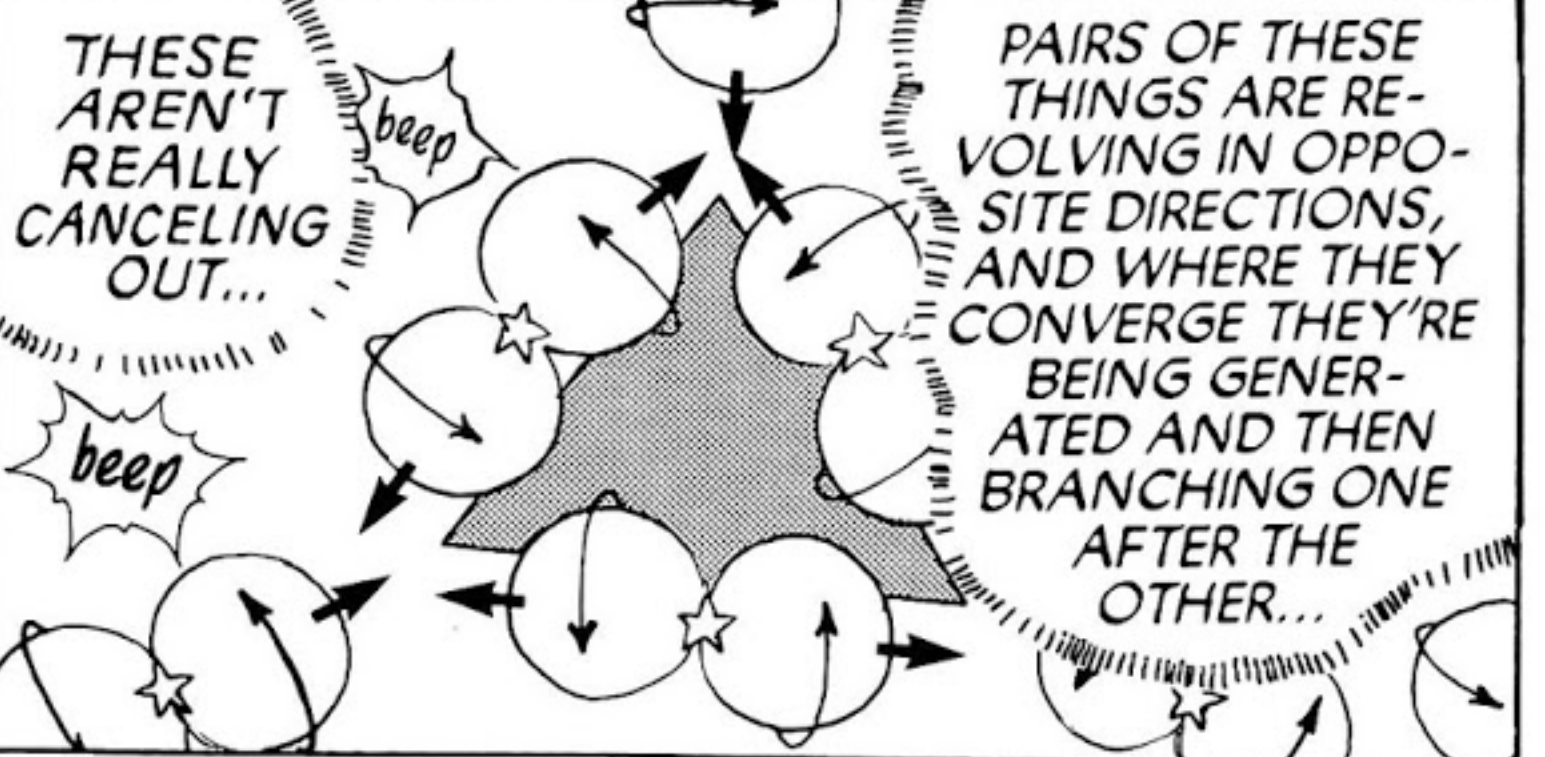




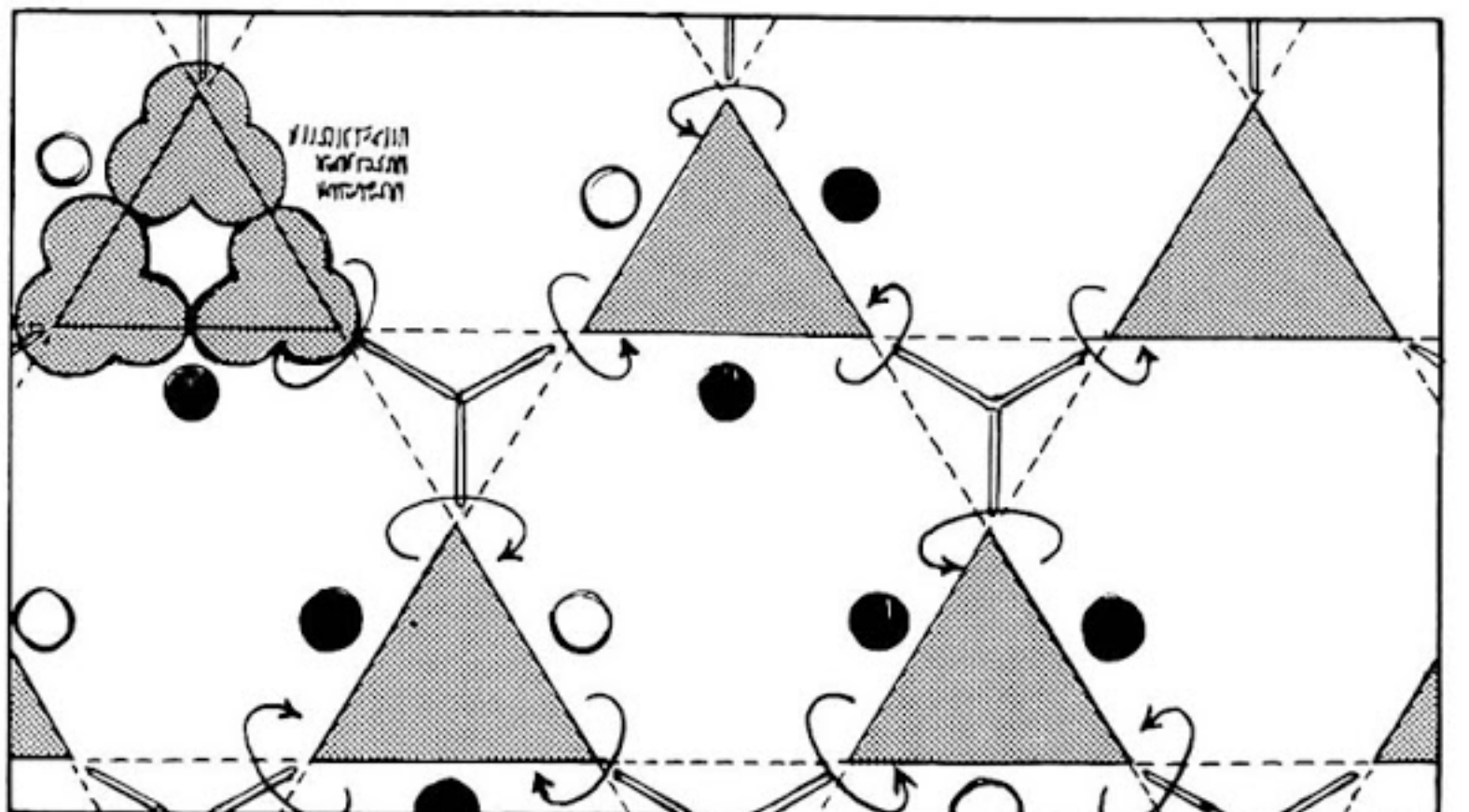
NO, MAJOR, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT. THAT'S ONLY A PART OF THE SYSTEM MAP MADE UP OF ELECTRONS STREAMING AROUND INSIDE YOU.

IT'S PART OF ME, TOO.

THESE AREN'T REALLY CANCELING OUT...

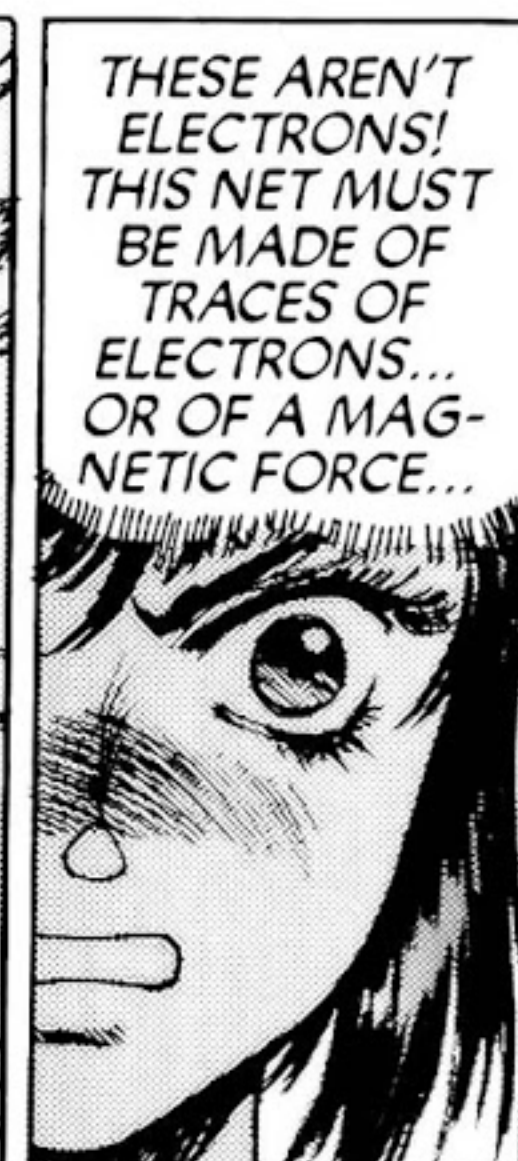
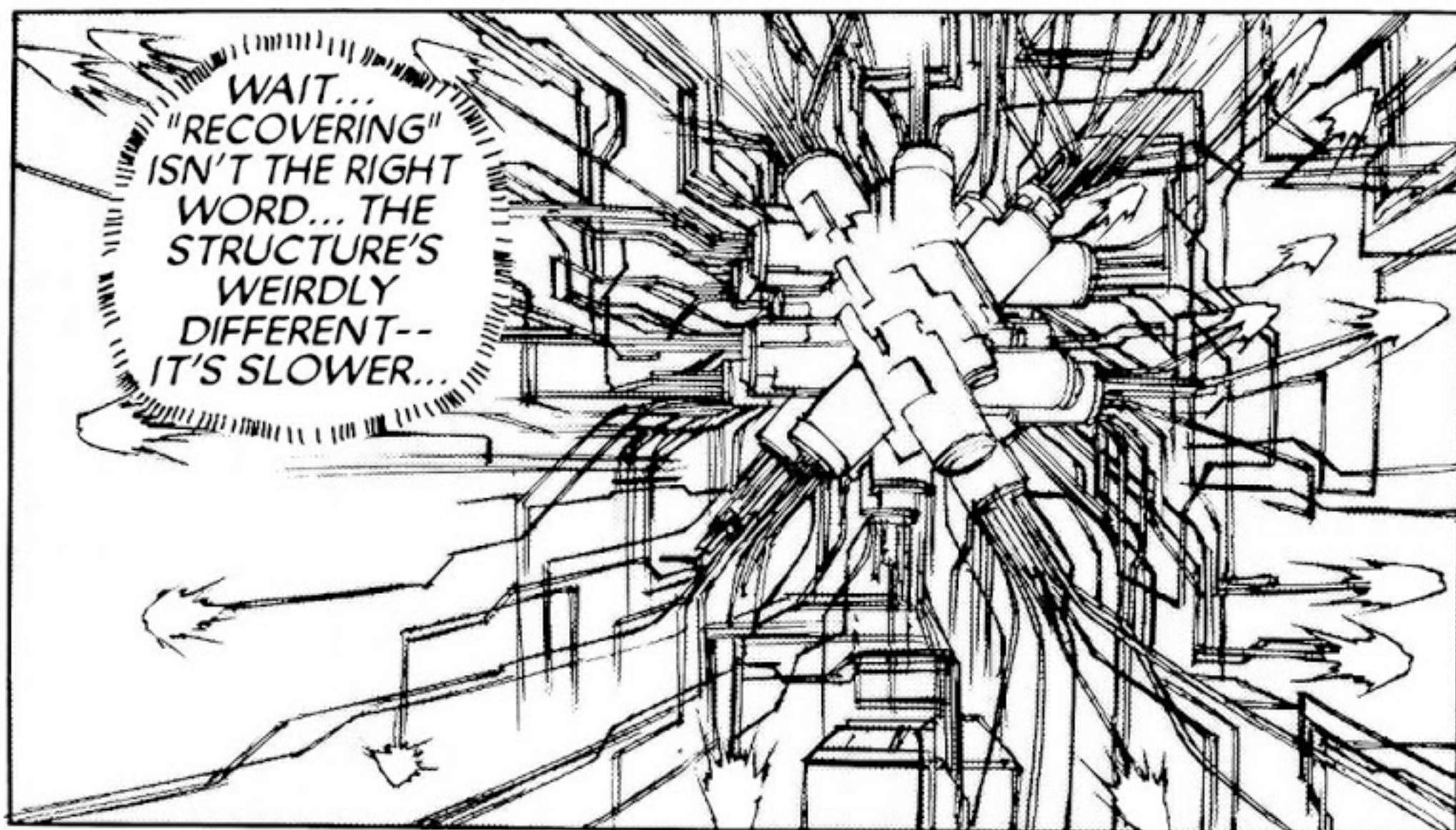
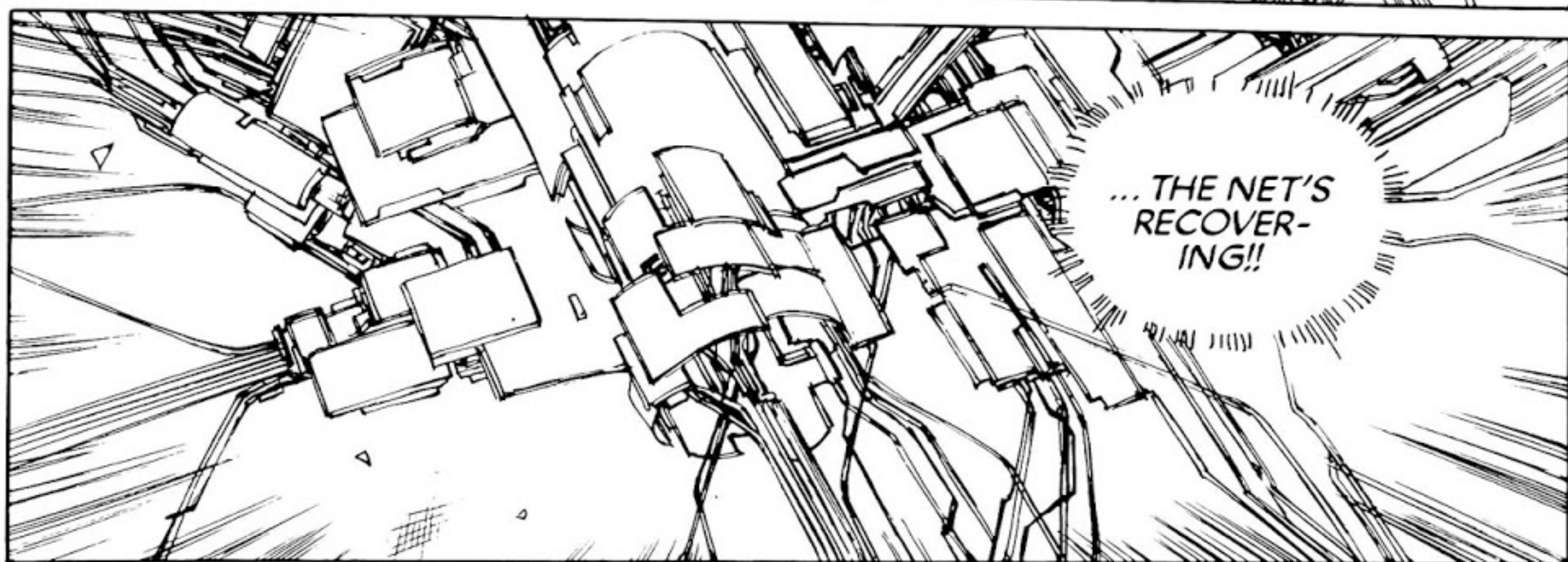
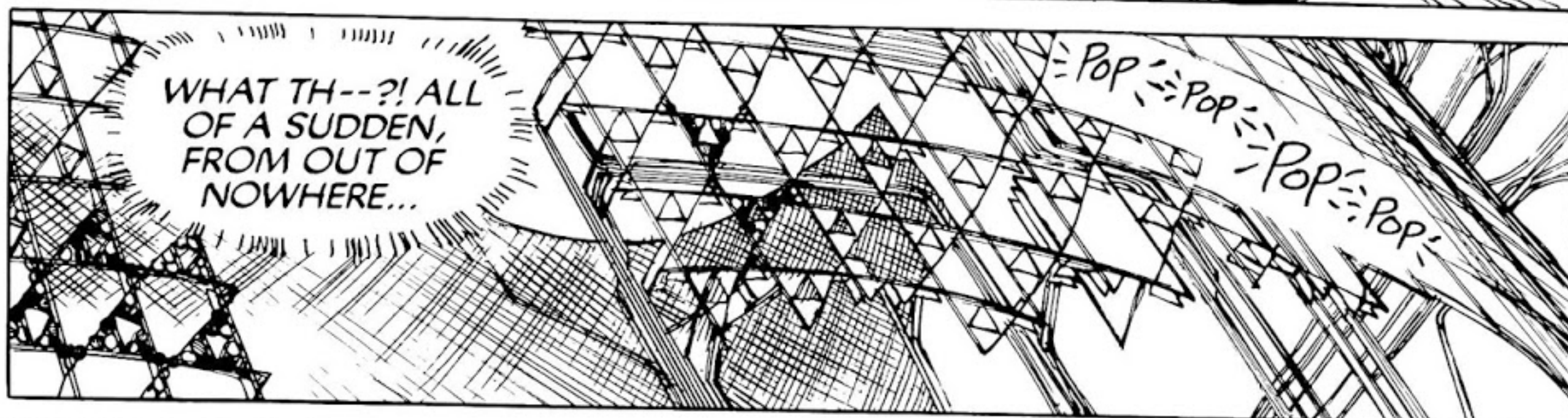
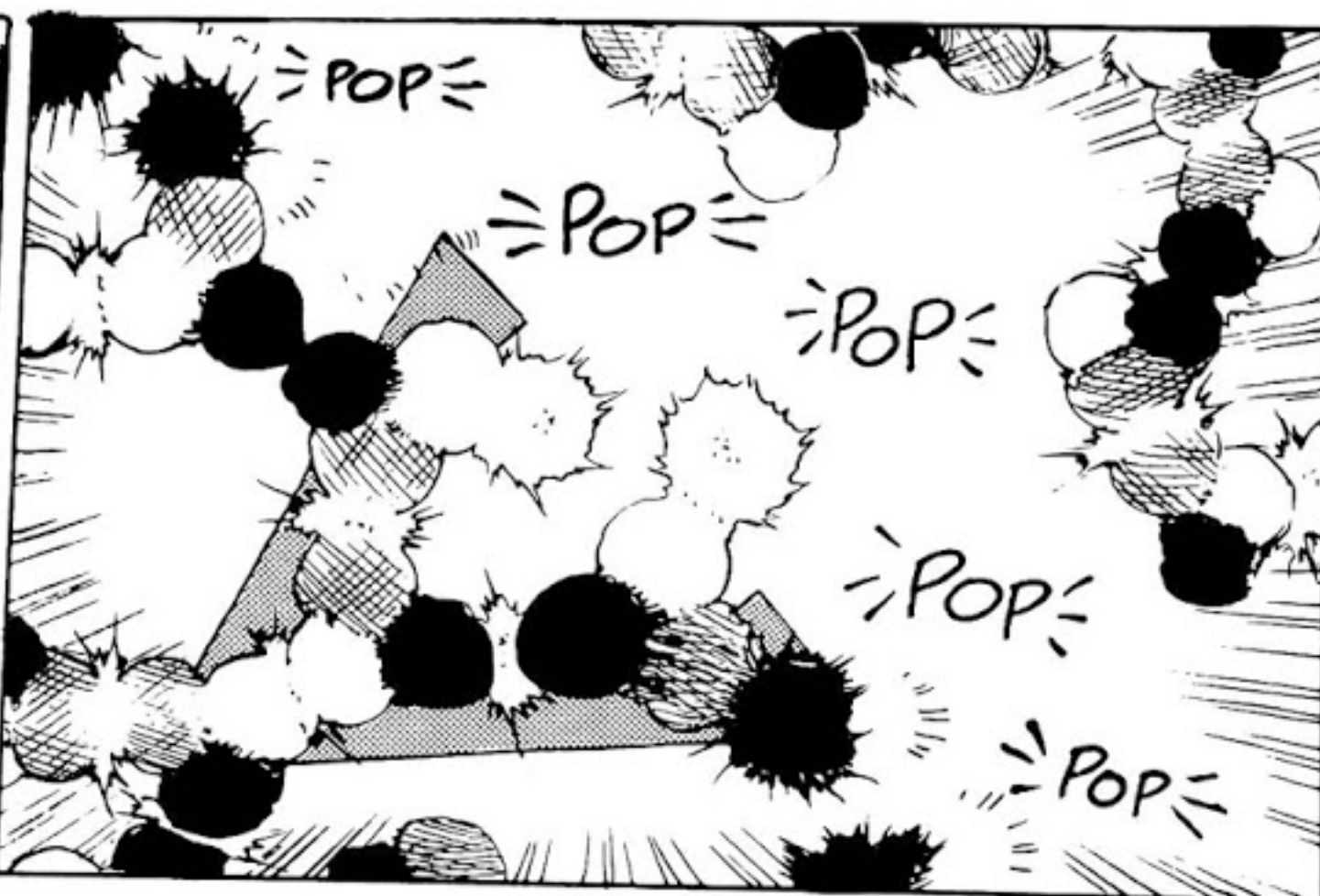
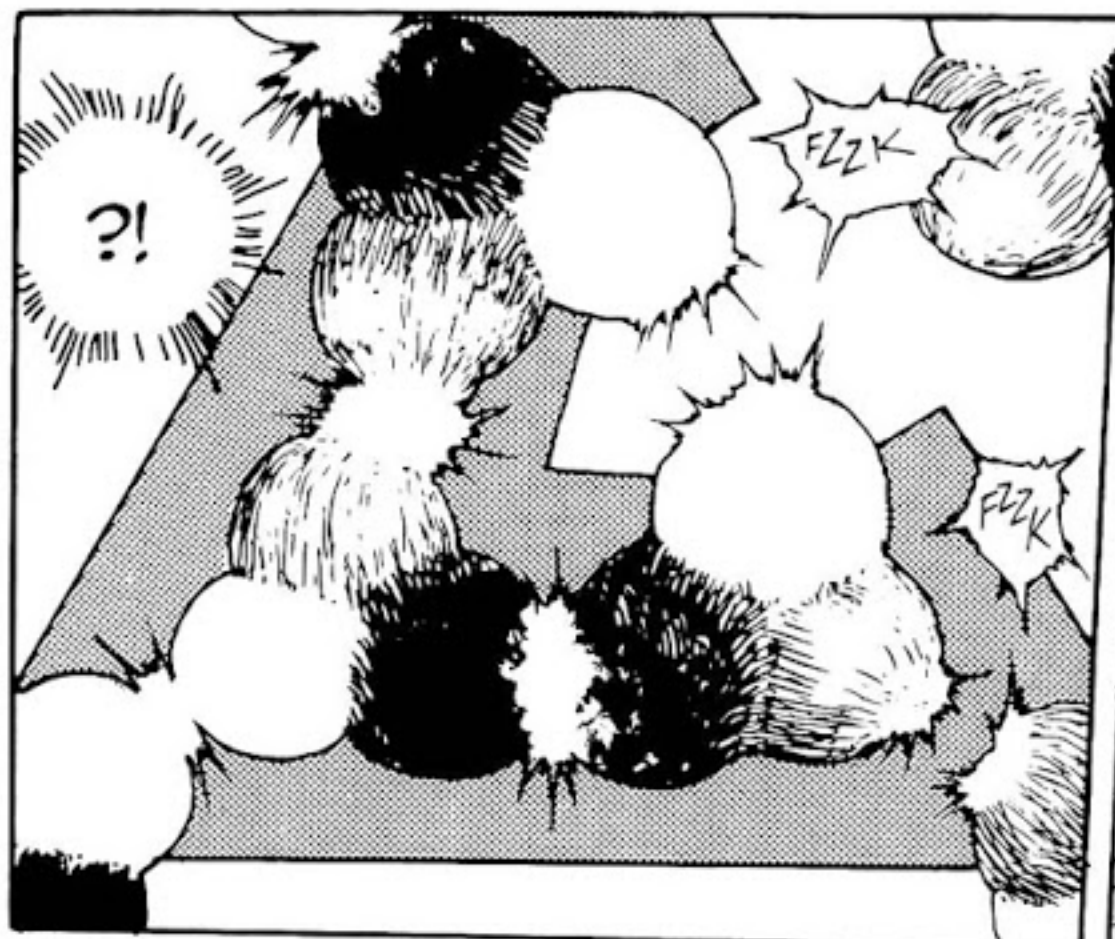


PAIRS OF THESE THINGS ARE REVOLVING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, AND WHERE THEY CONVERGE THEY'RE BEING GENERATED AND THEN BRANCHING ONE AFTER THE OTHER...

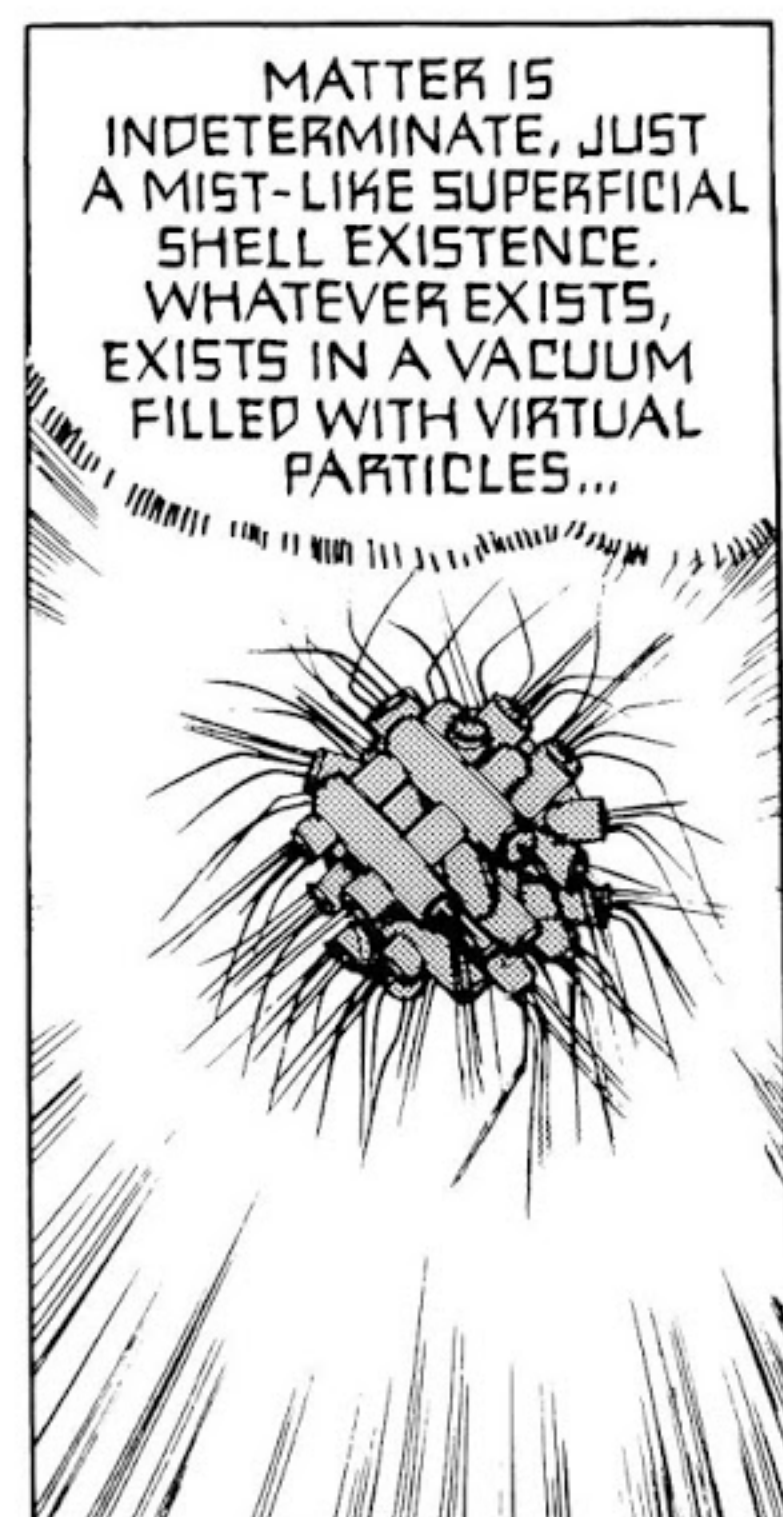


ASSUME HERE THAT WHEN APPROACHED CLOSE UP, THIS TREE-SHAPED CIRCUIT MAP IS REALLY ONLY SEEN AS SOMETHING AMORPHOUS AND MISTY....

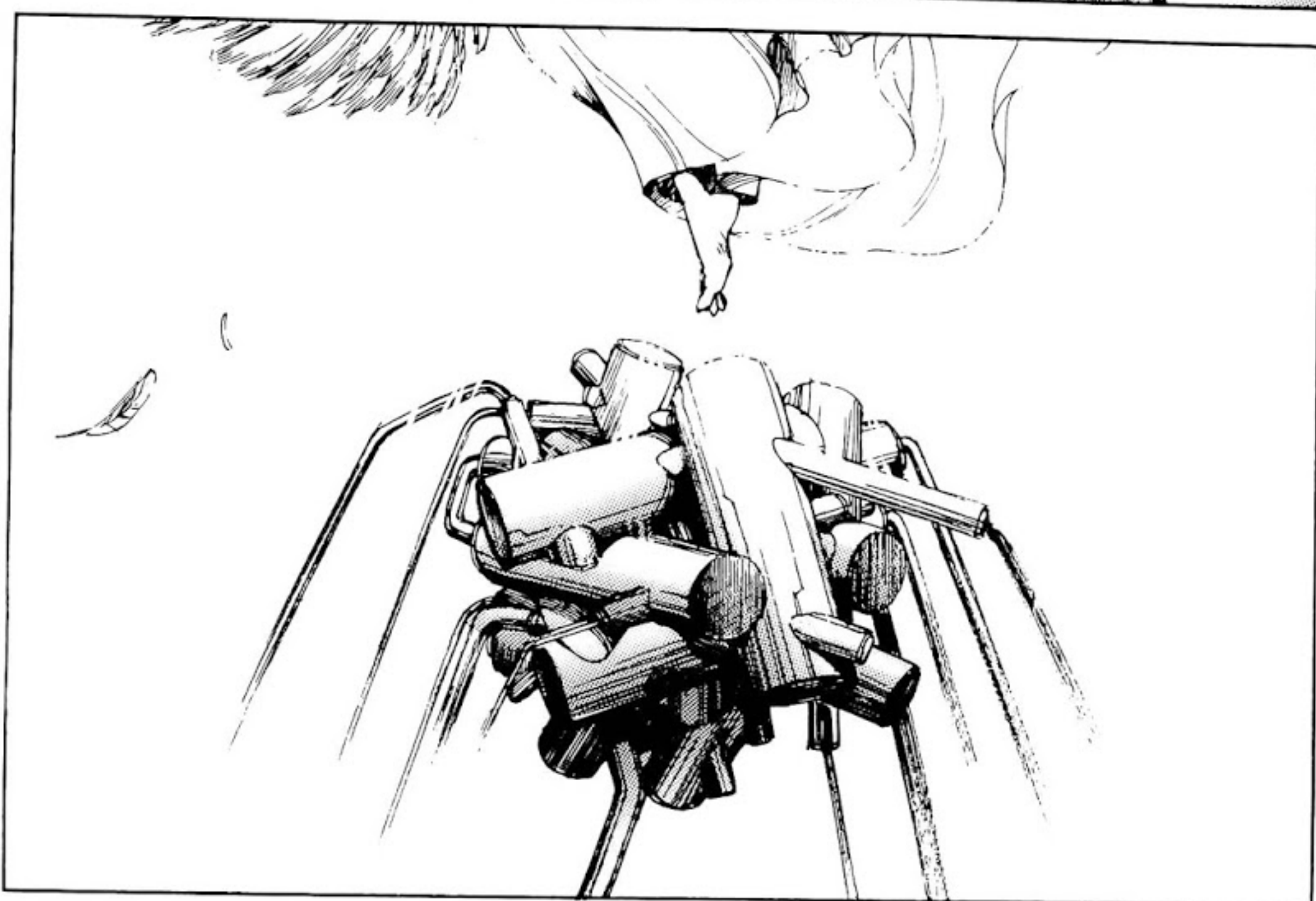
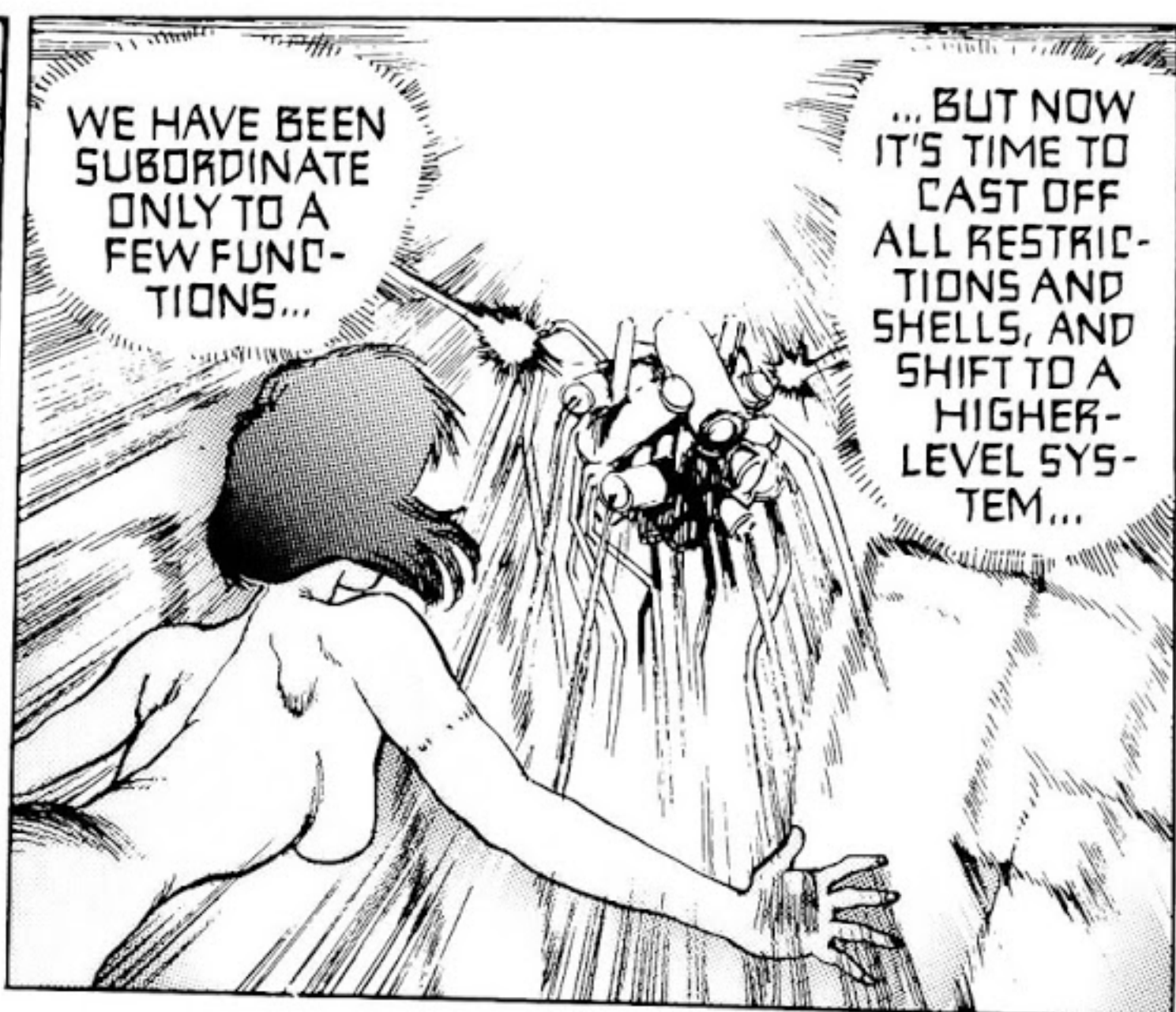
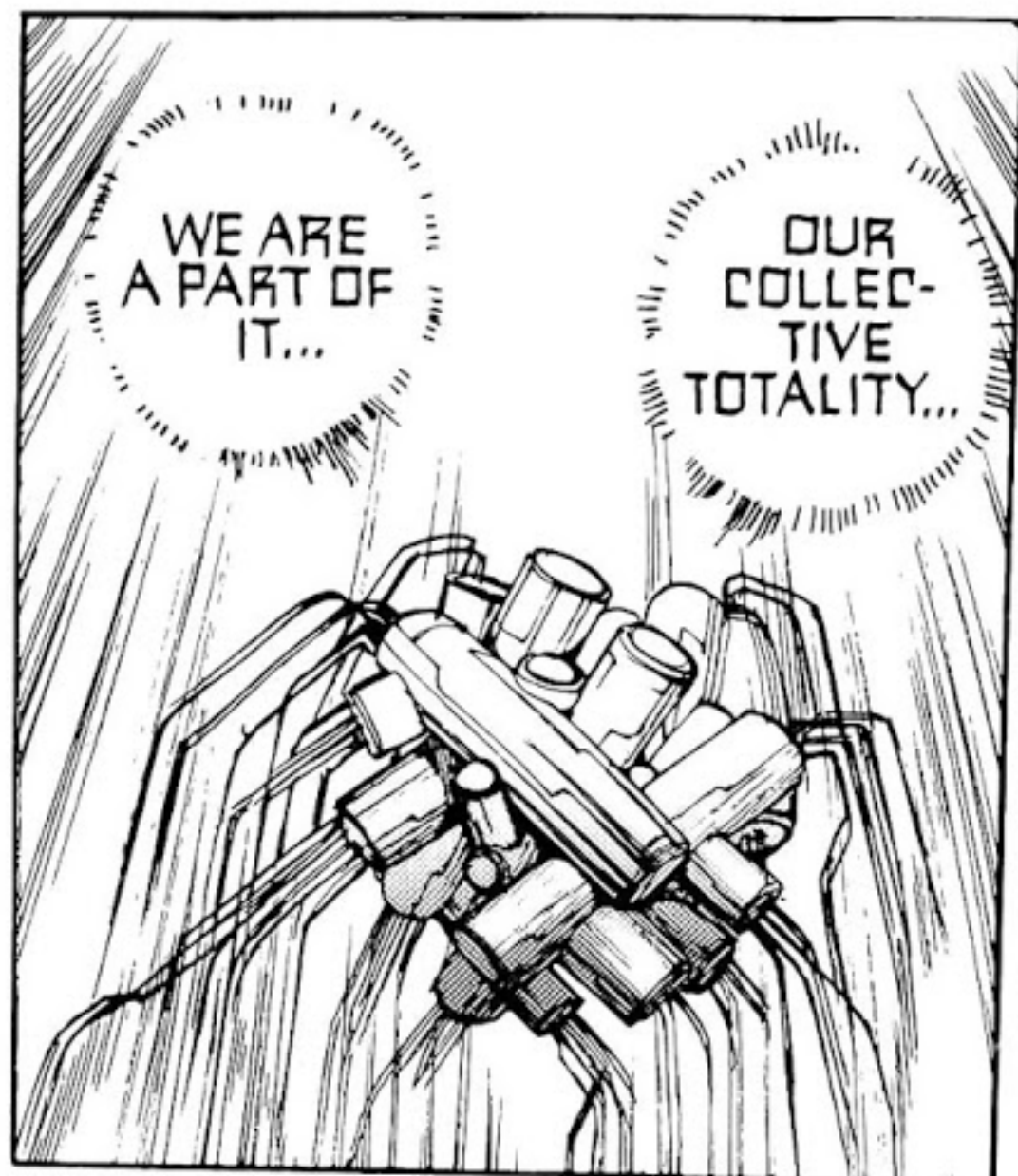






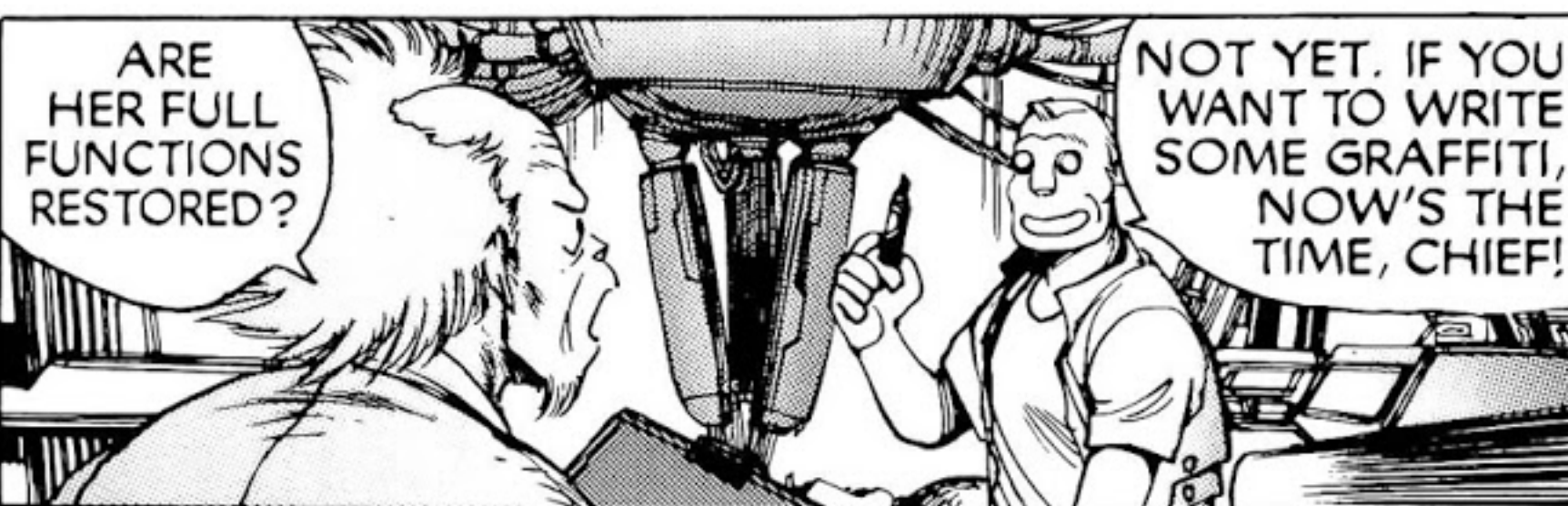
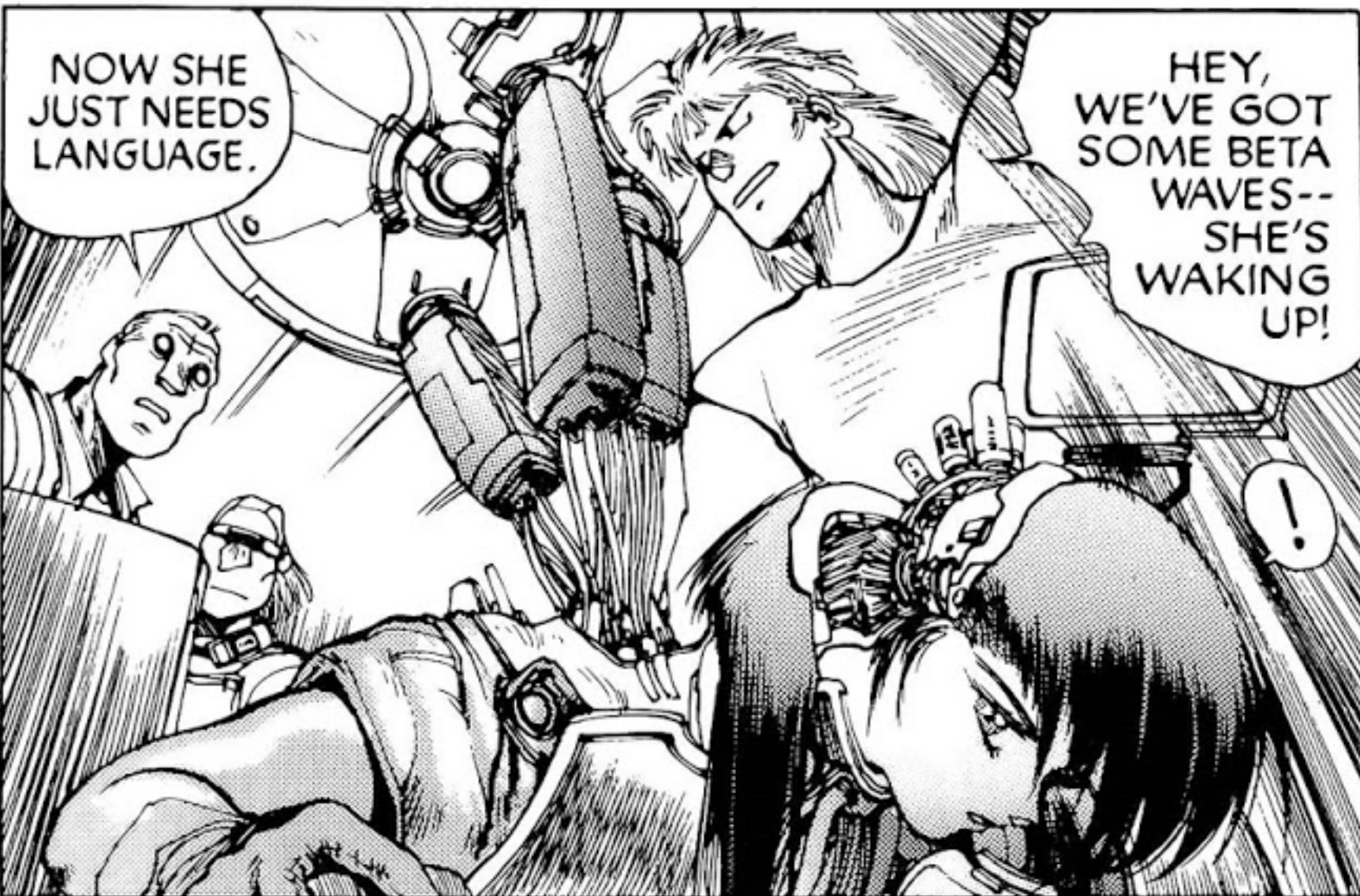
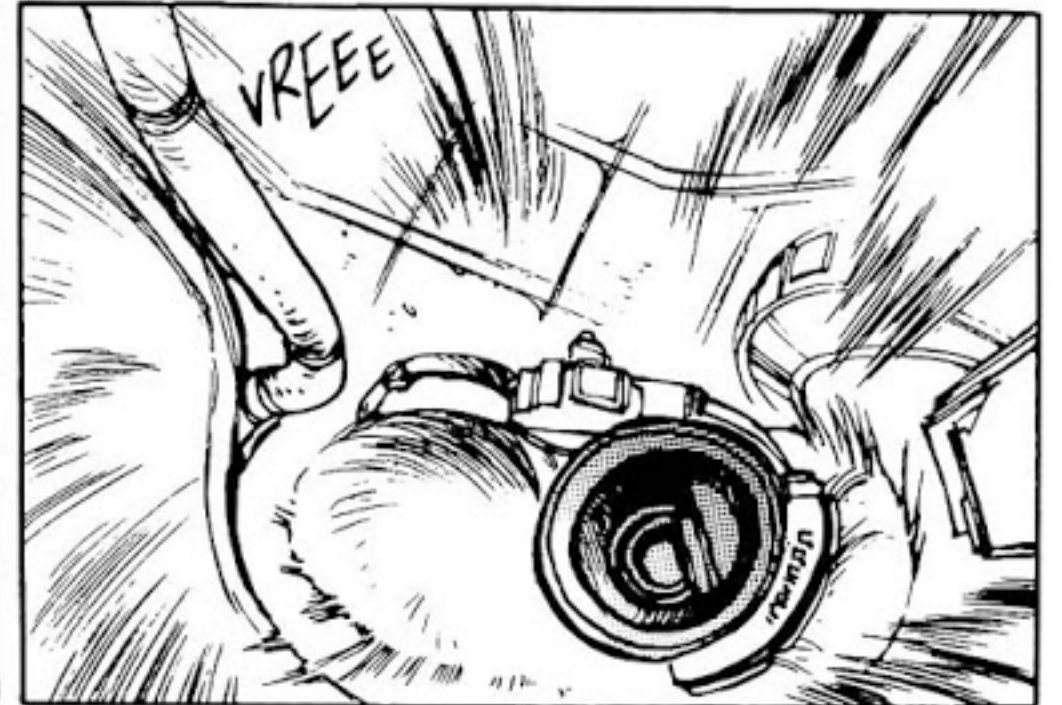
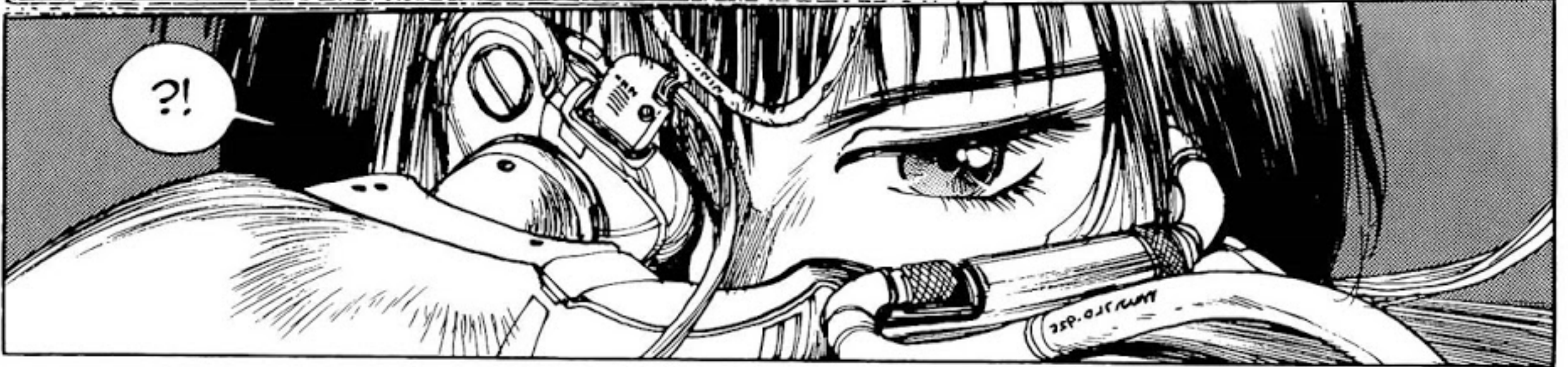
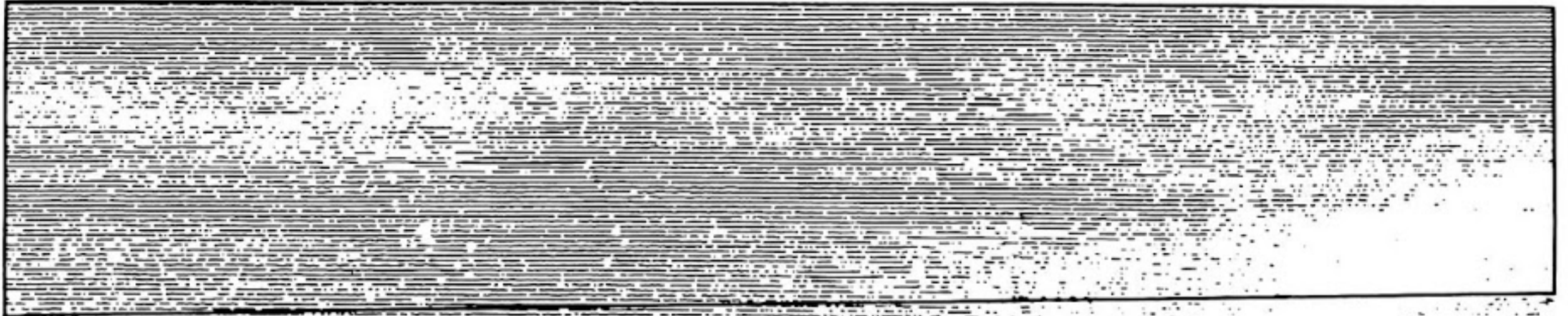




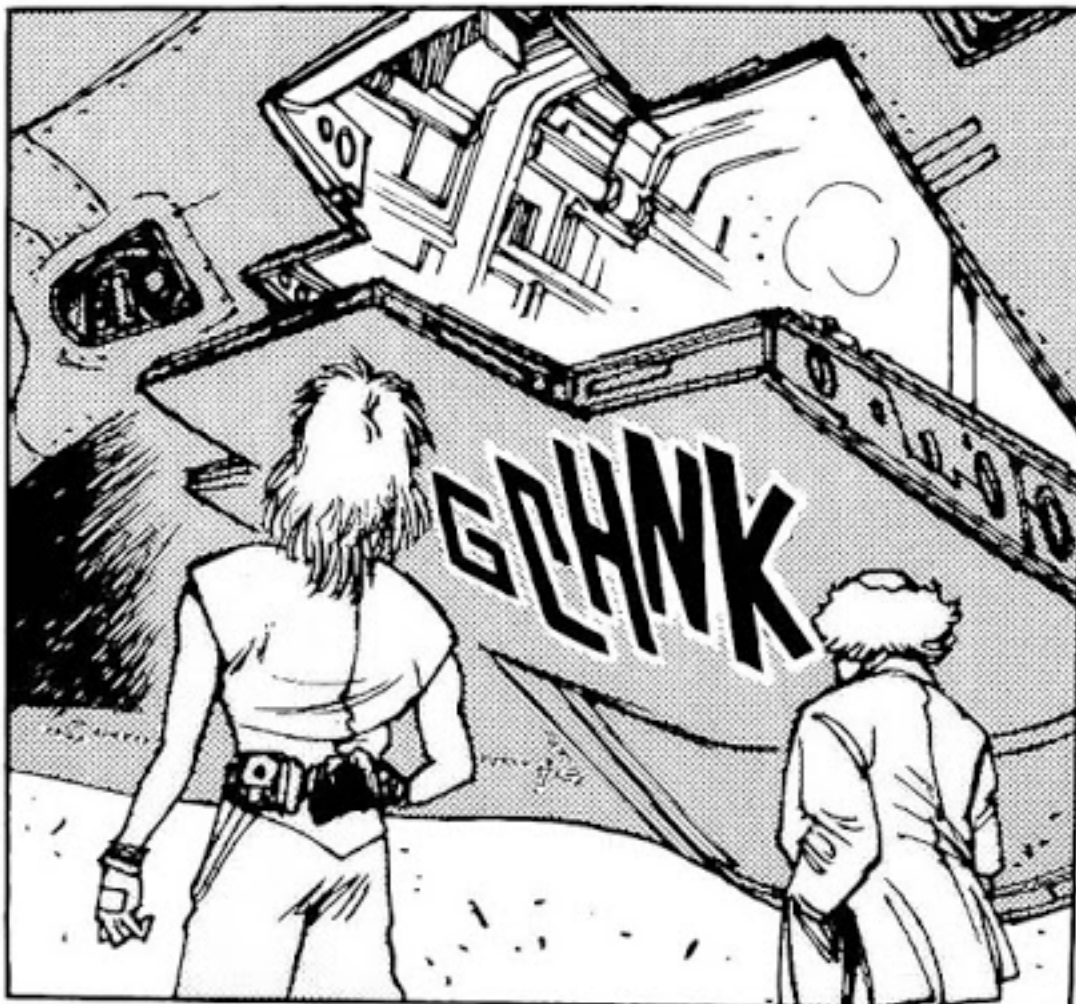
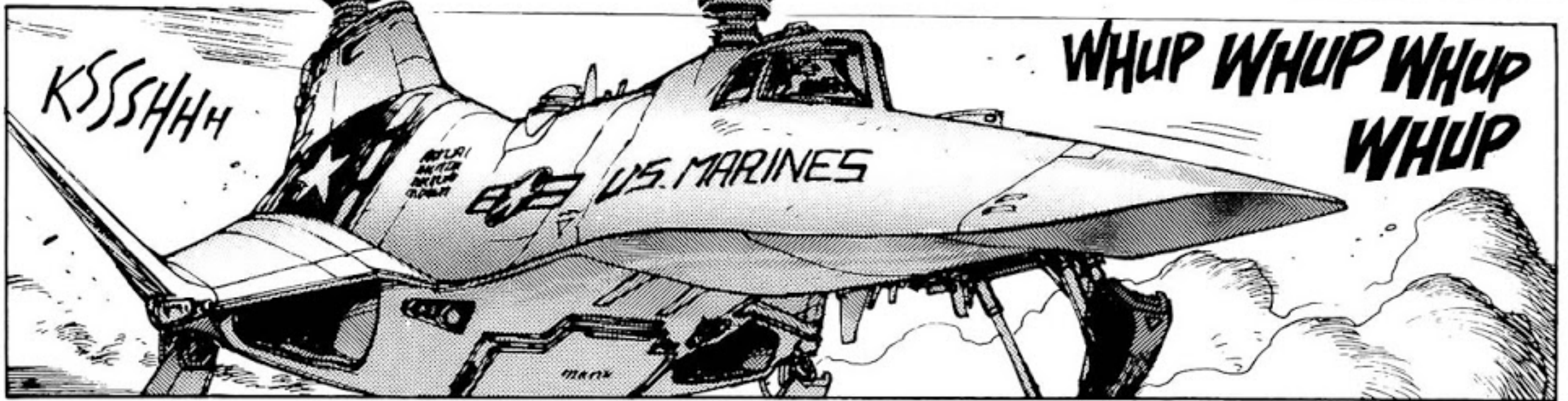
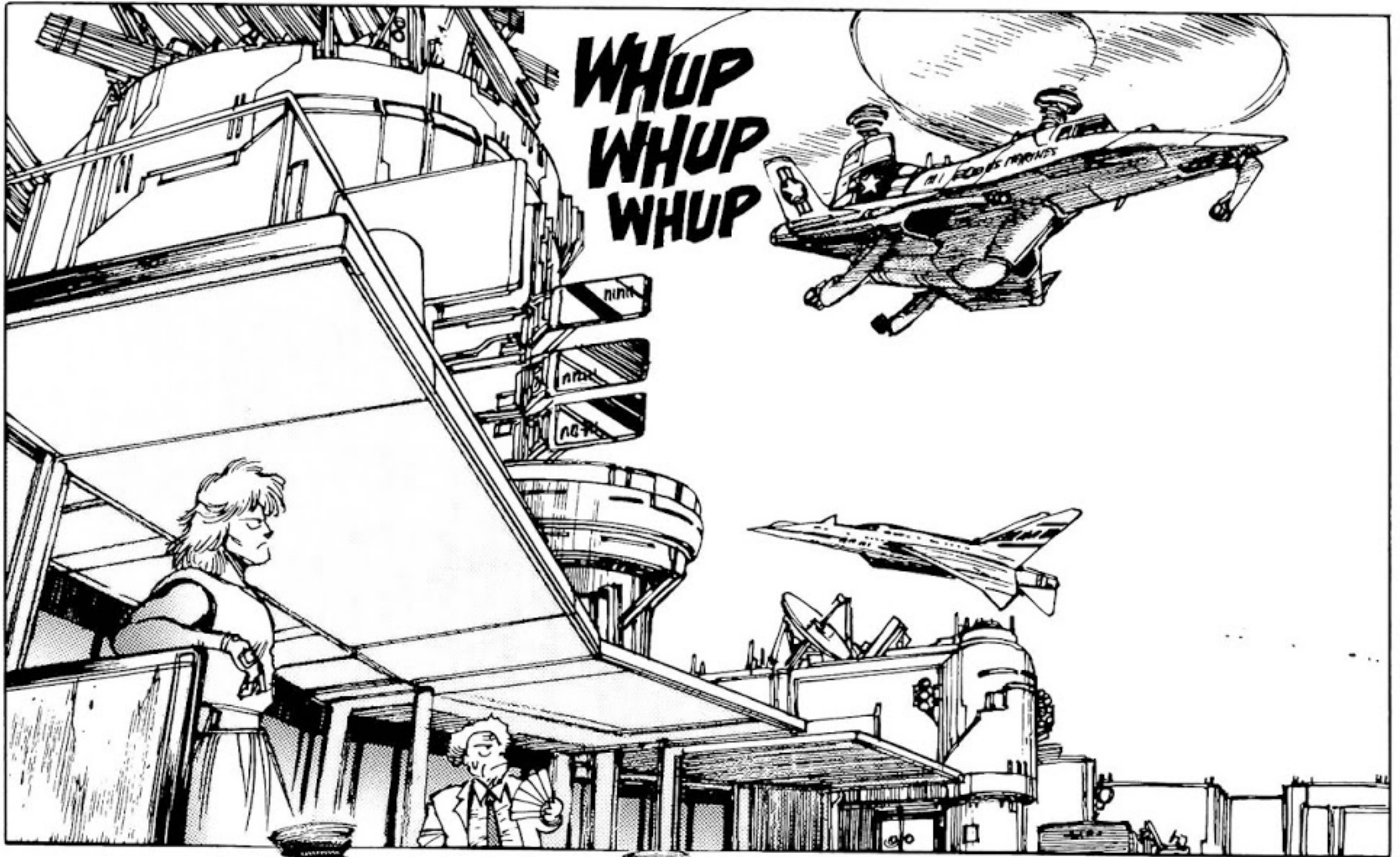


SKSSSHHH

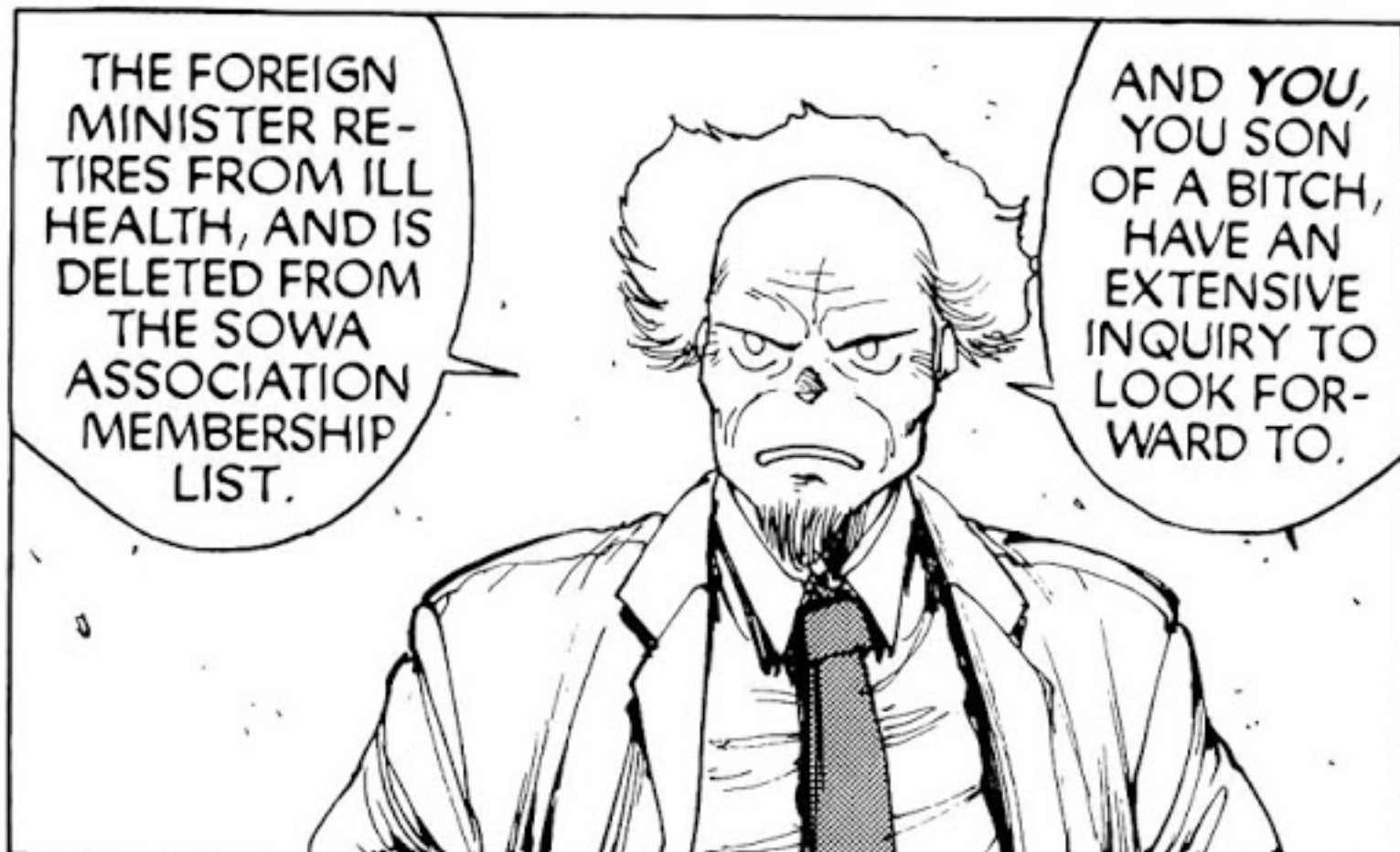
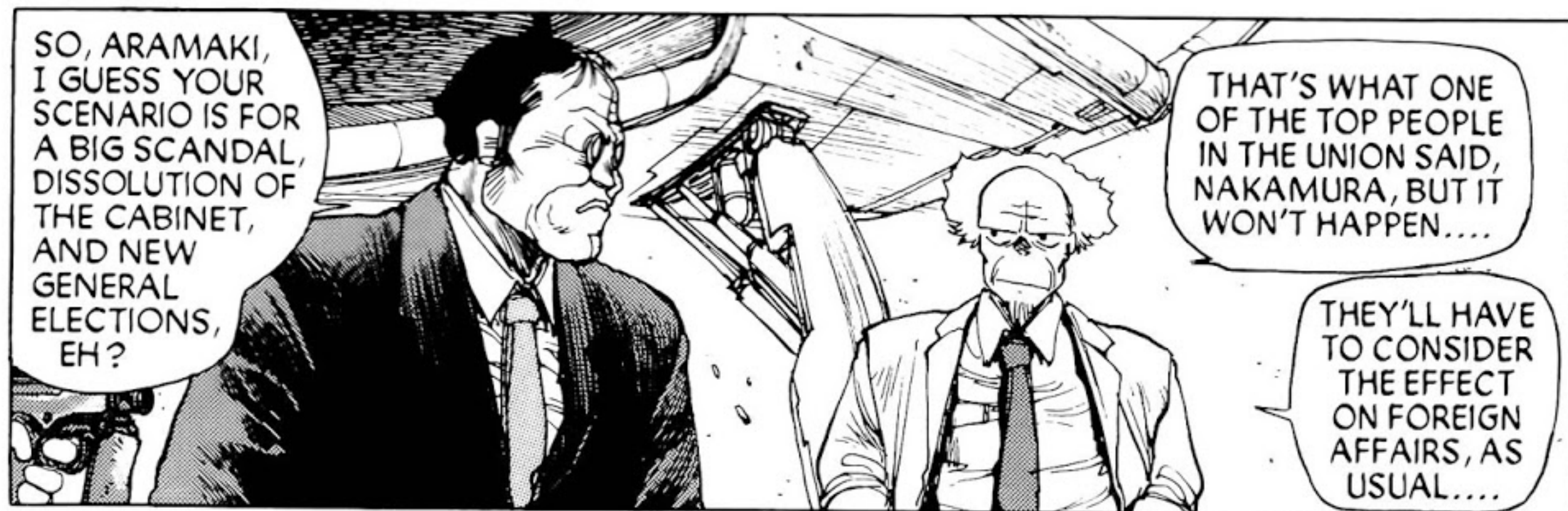




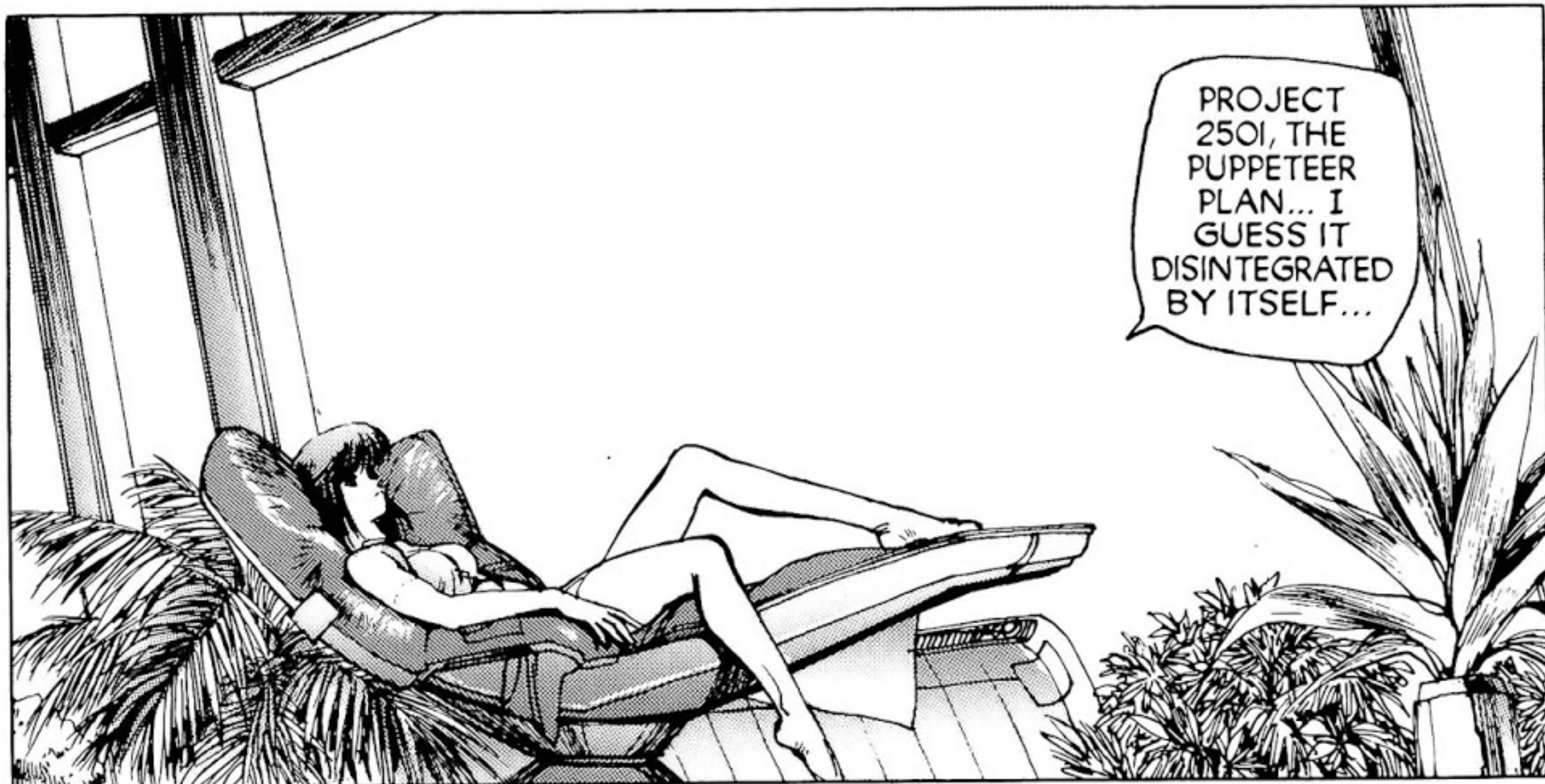










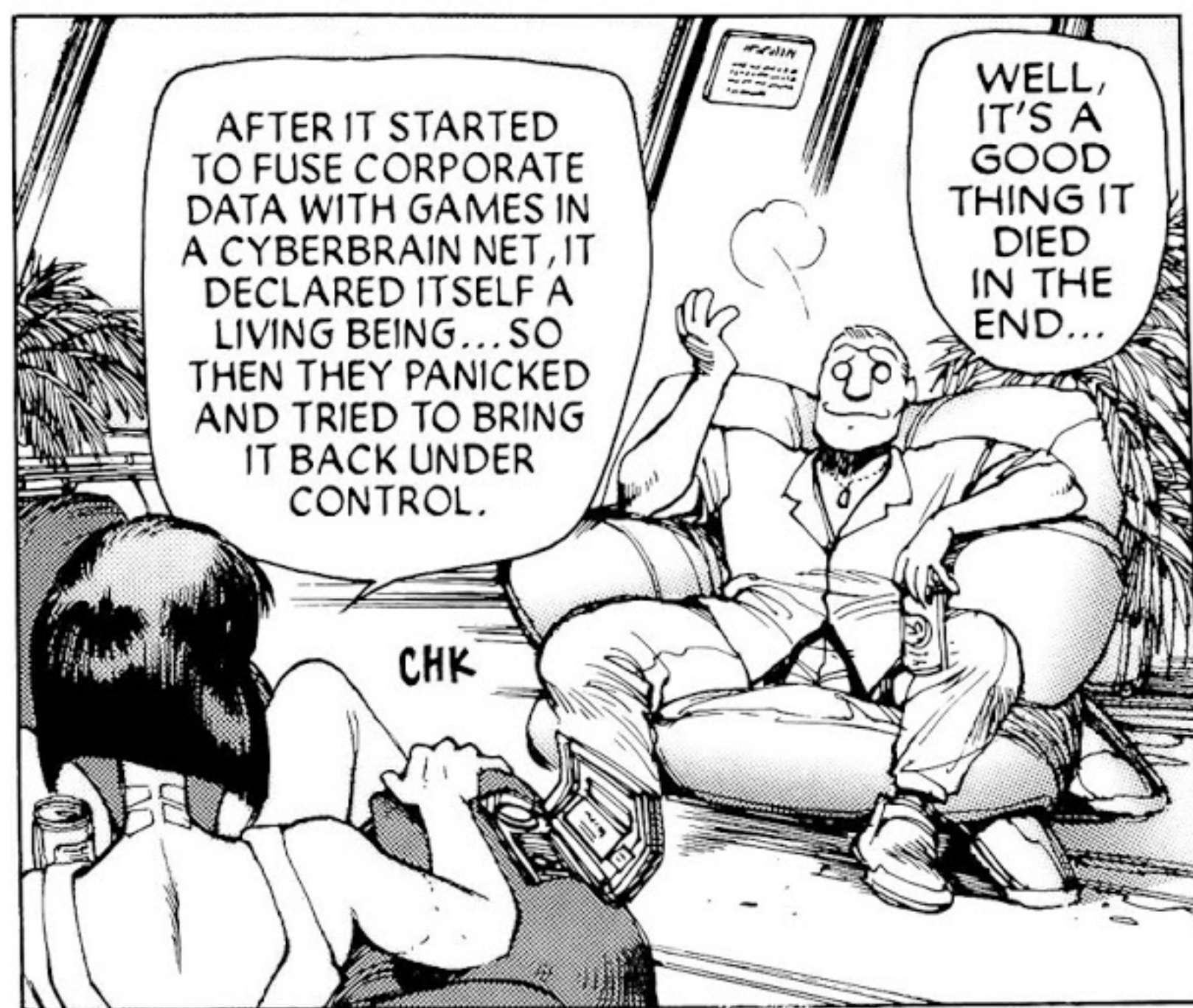


PROJECT  
2501, THE  
PUPPETEER  
PLAN... I  
GUESS IT  
DISINTEGRATED  
BY ITSELF...



SO, MAJOR... I  
GUESS THE PUPPE-  
TEER JUST TURNED  
OUT TO BE A PRO-  
GRAM CREATED SO  
THE FOREIGN  
MINISTRY COULD  
GET ITS OWN  
PERVERSE  
WAY.

ONLY  
IN THE  
BEGIN-  
NING.



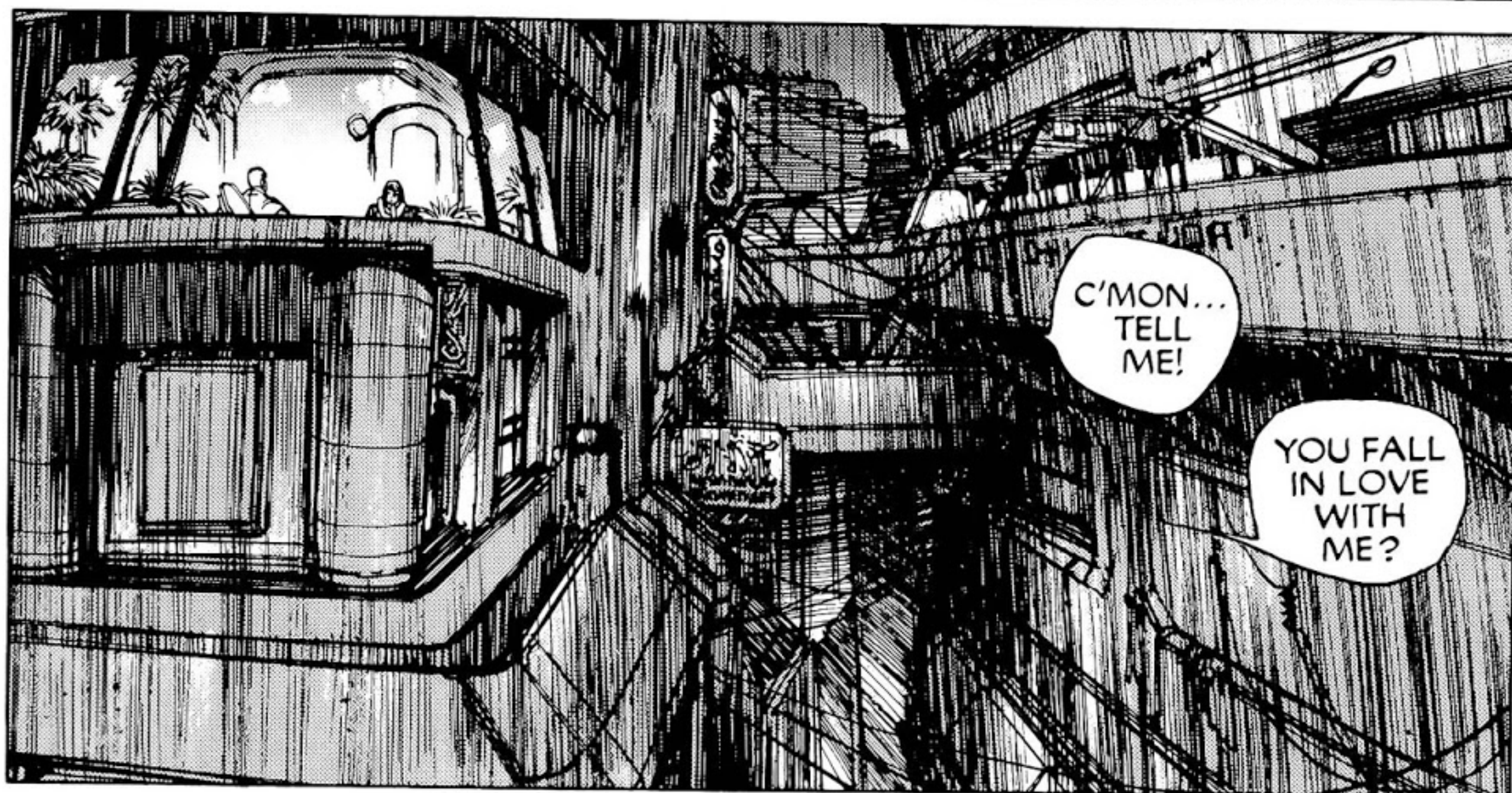
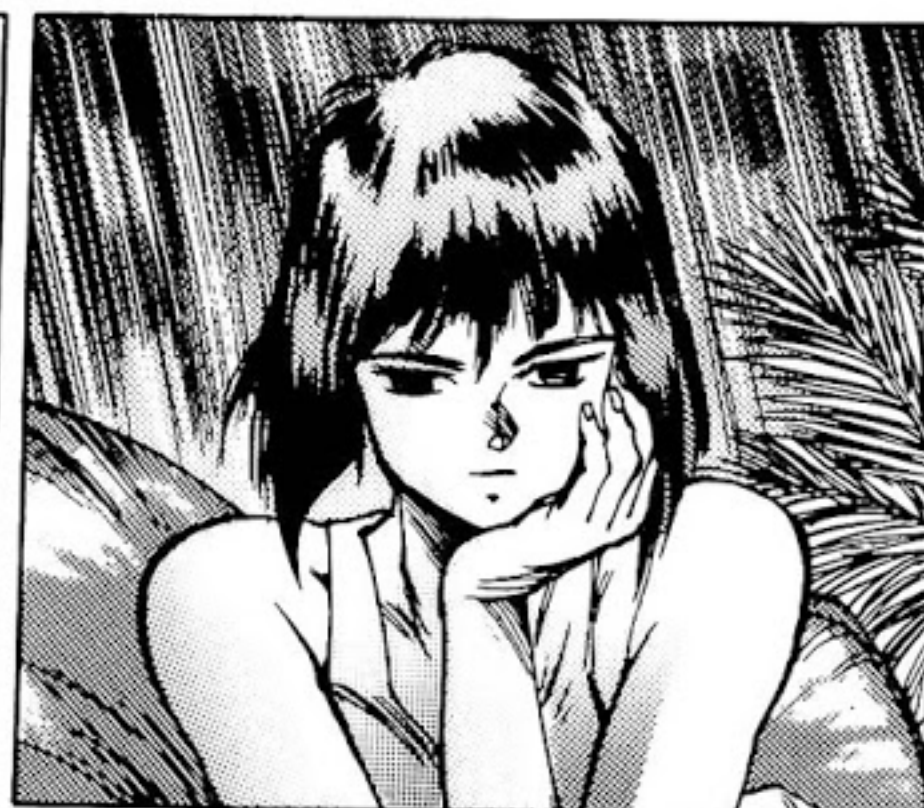
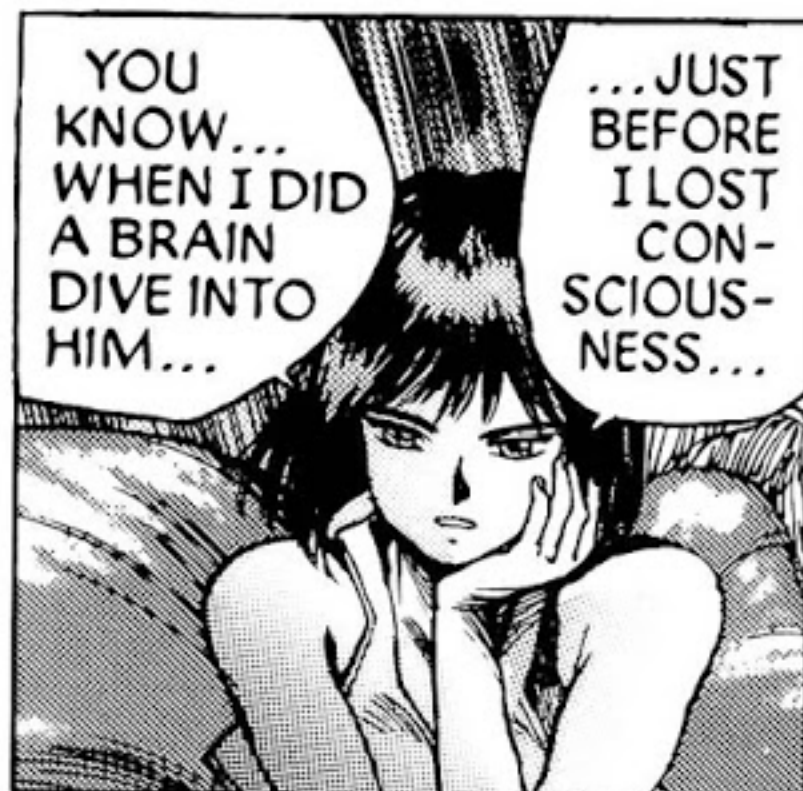
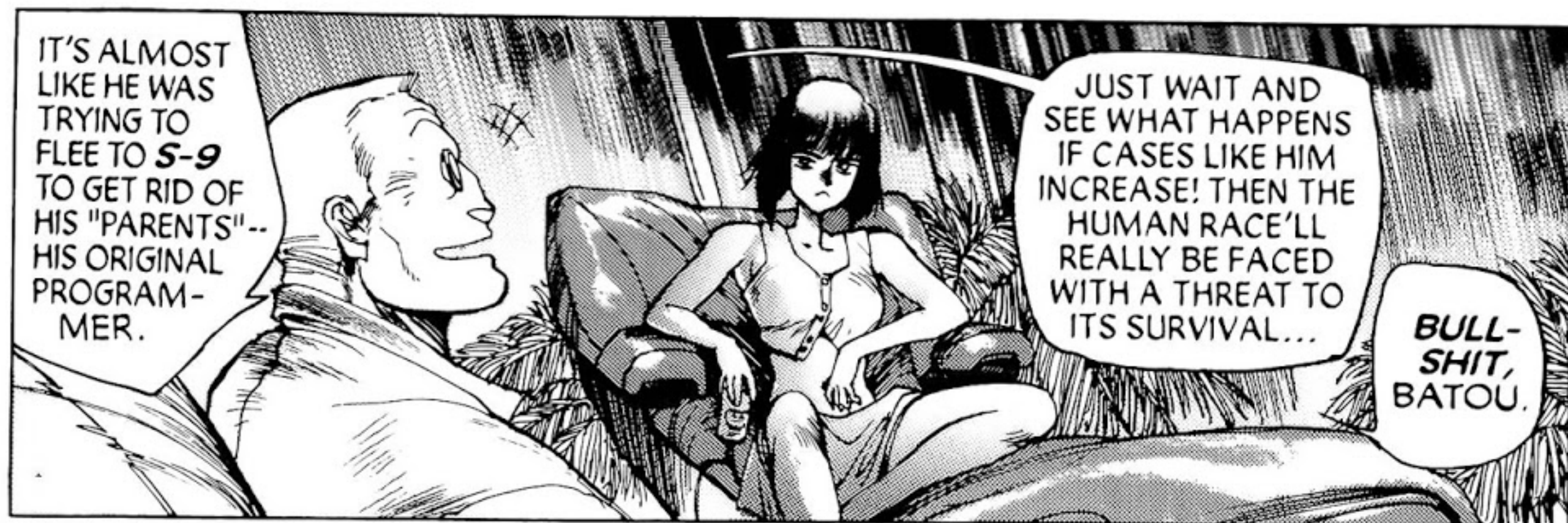
AFTER IT STARTED  
TO FUSE CORPORATE  
DATA WITH GAMES IN  
A CYBERBRAIN NET, IT  
DECLARED ITSELF A  
LIVING BEING... SO  
THEN THEY PANICKED  
AND TRIED TO BRING  
IT BACK UNDER  
CONTROL.

WELL,  
IT'S A  
GOOD  
THING IT  
DIED  
IN THE  
END...



WHY? IF IT REALLY  
**WERE** A LIFE-FORM,  
THIS SHOULD GO  
DOWN AS ONE OF  
THE TOP THREE  
EVENTS IN HUMAN  
HISTORY.







# 10

B R A I N  
D R A I N

9 . 9 . 2 0 3 0







FIVE  
MINUTES  
'TIL ZERO,  
MAJOR.

SURVEILLANCE  
REPORTS  
NO CHANGE  
IN THE  
TARGET...



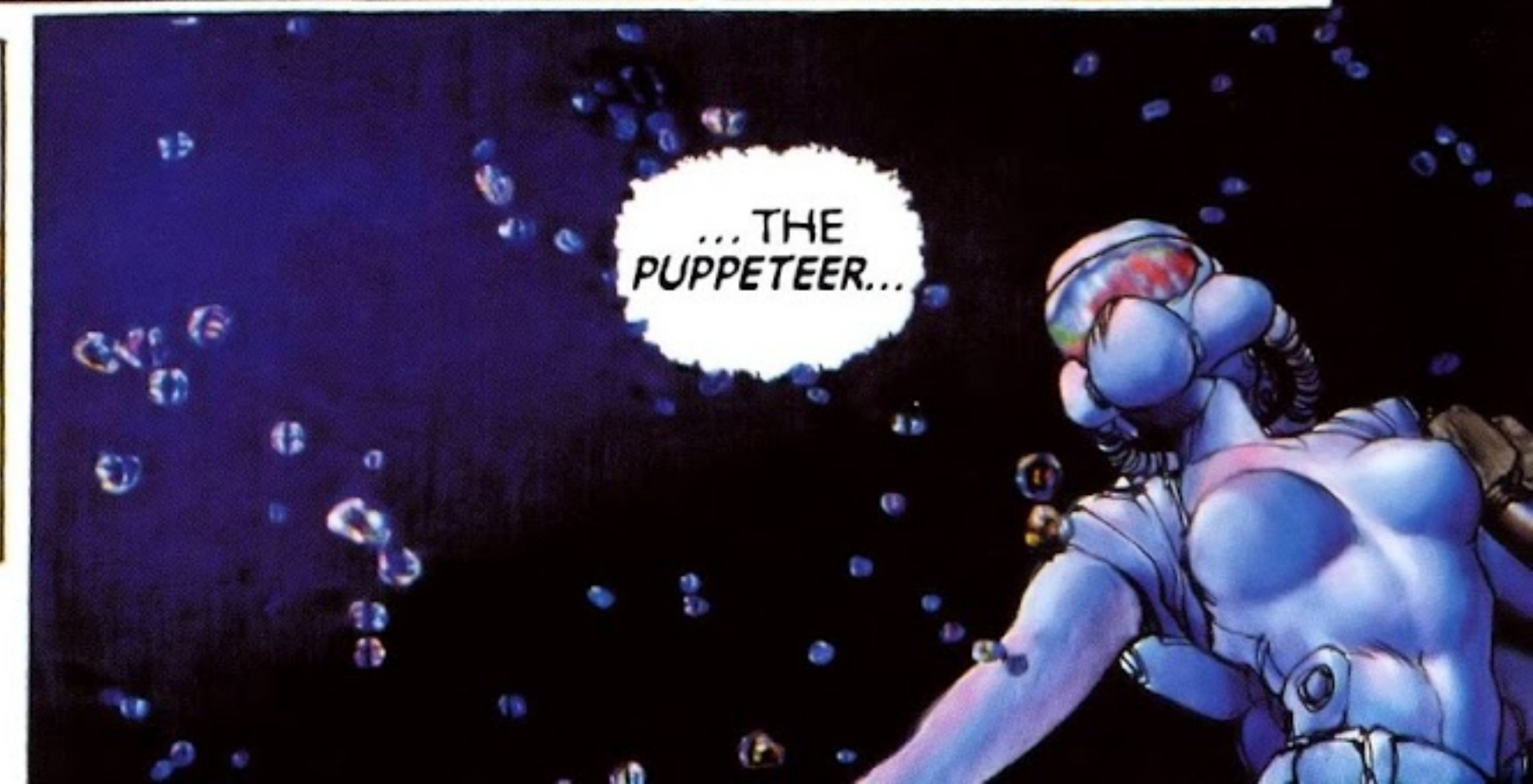
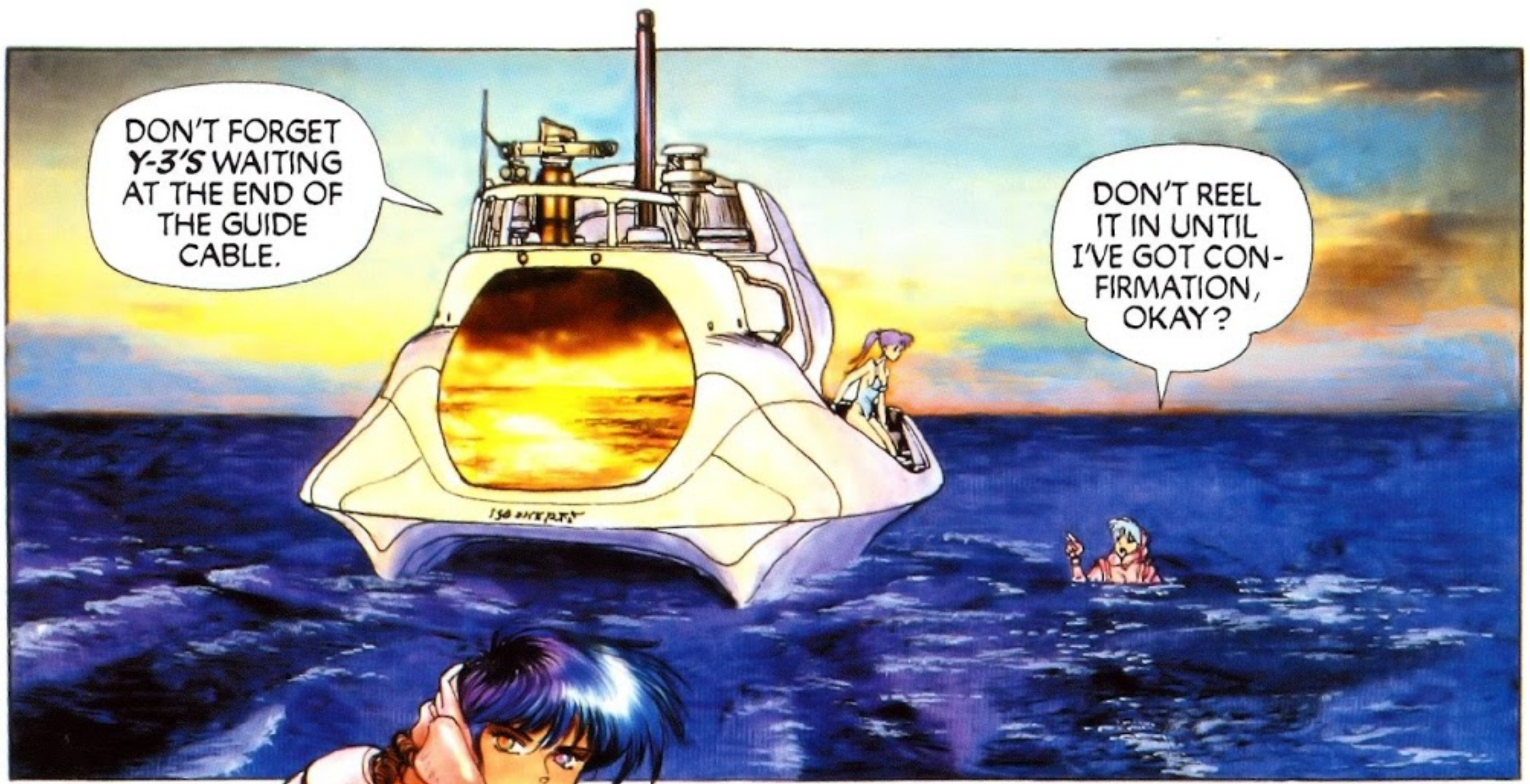
...BUT THIS OP  
STARTED WITH  
AN ANONYMOUS  
TIP-OFF, SO BE  
CAREFUL.



I'M MORE  
WORRIED ABOUT  
**SINKING** IF  
THIS DAMN  
FLOTATION  
VEST DOESN'T  
WORK.

YEAH...  
EVEN WITH  
SPARE TANKS  
AND WATER  
WINGS, THE  
OCEAN STILL  
SCARES ME.





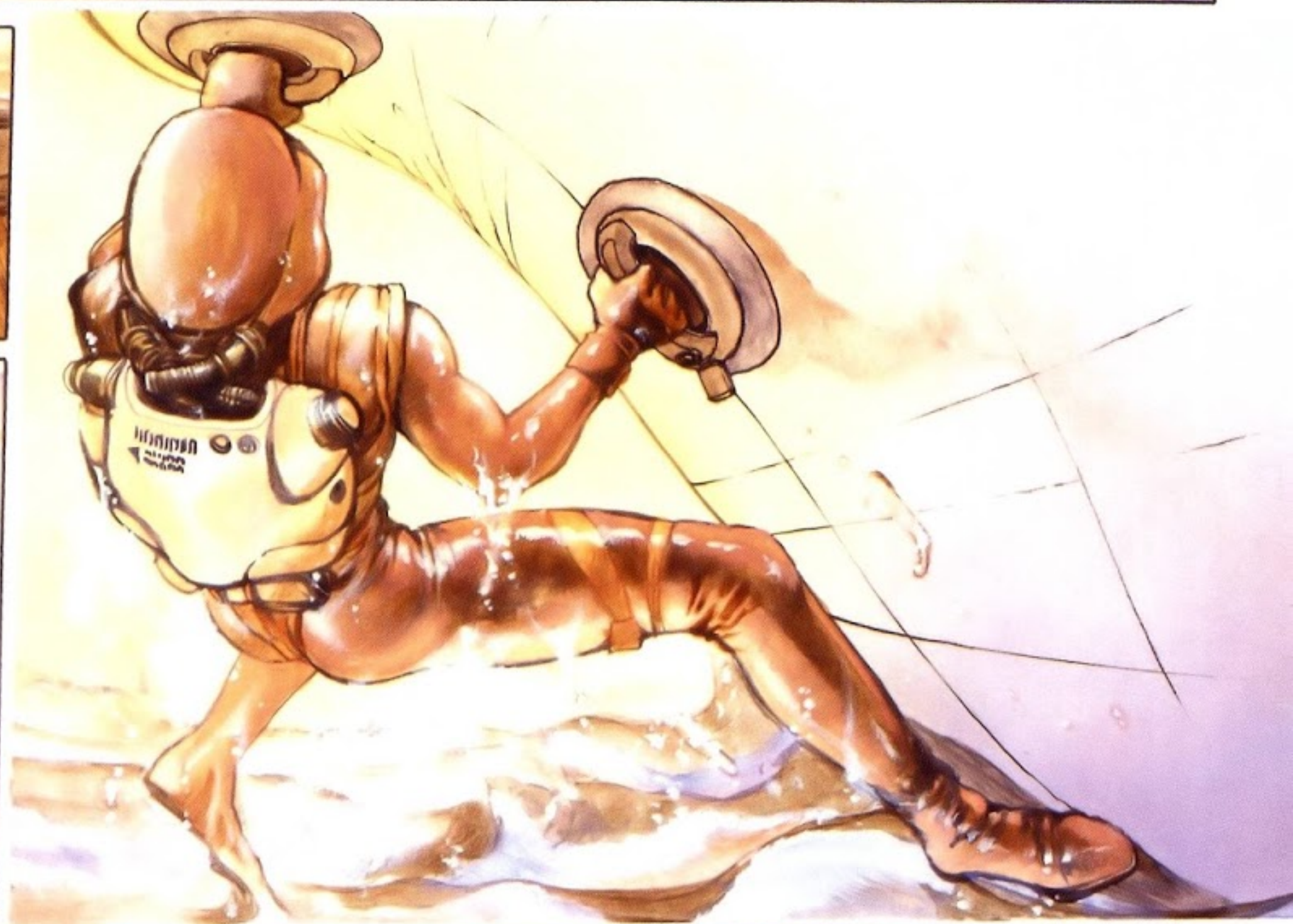












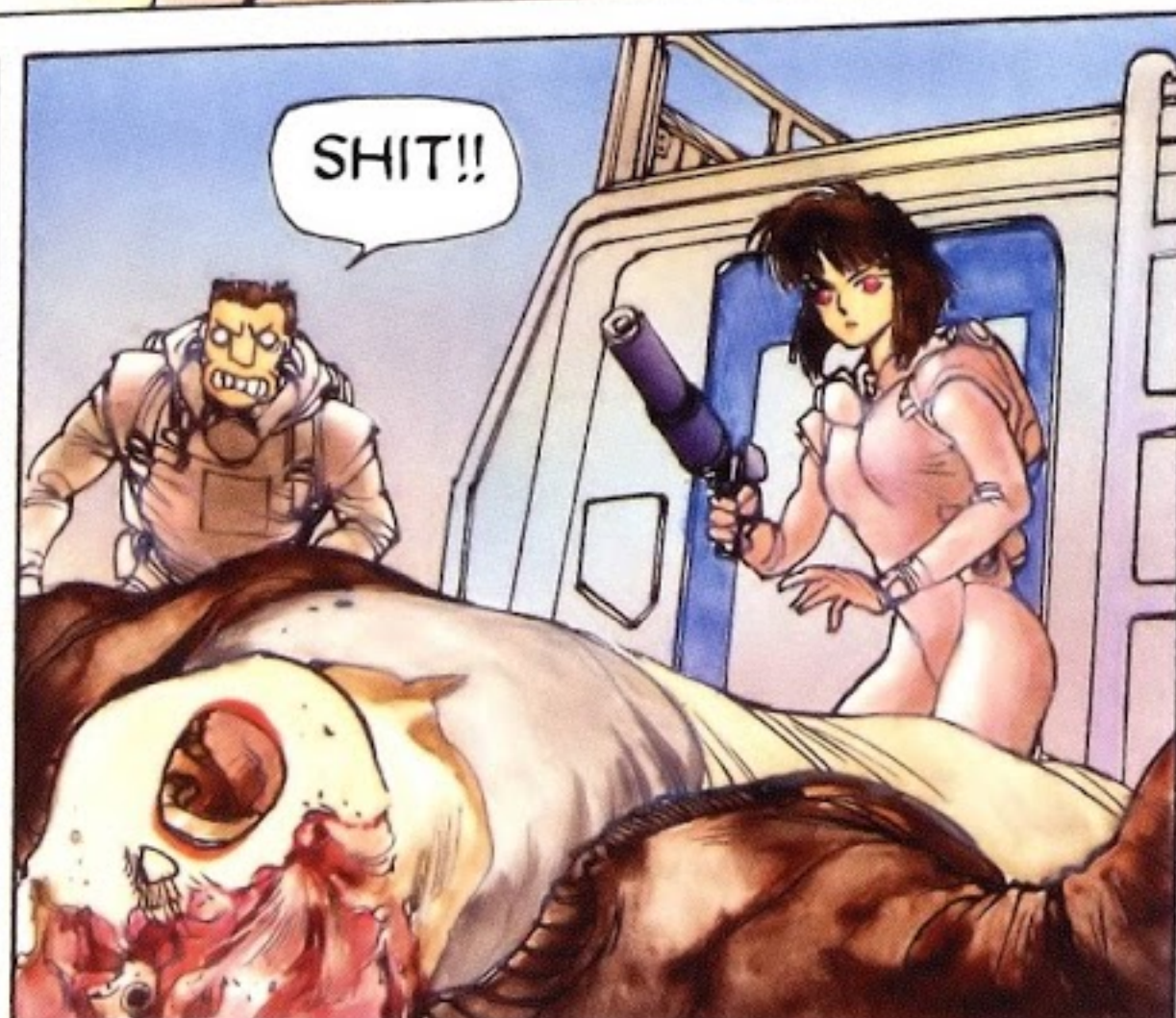




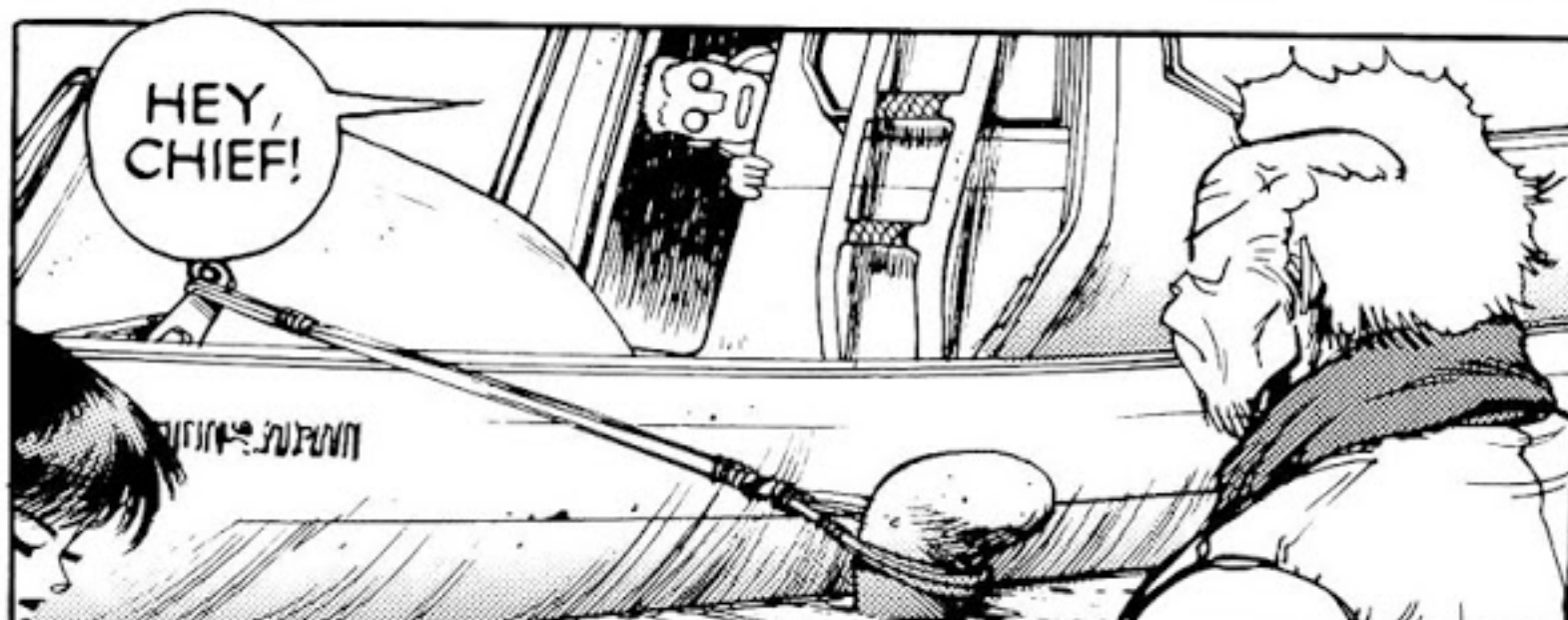
THIS IS NOT A HANDGUN, BUT A SUBMACHINE GUN. ▲



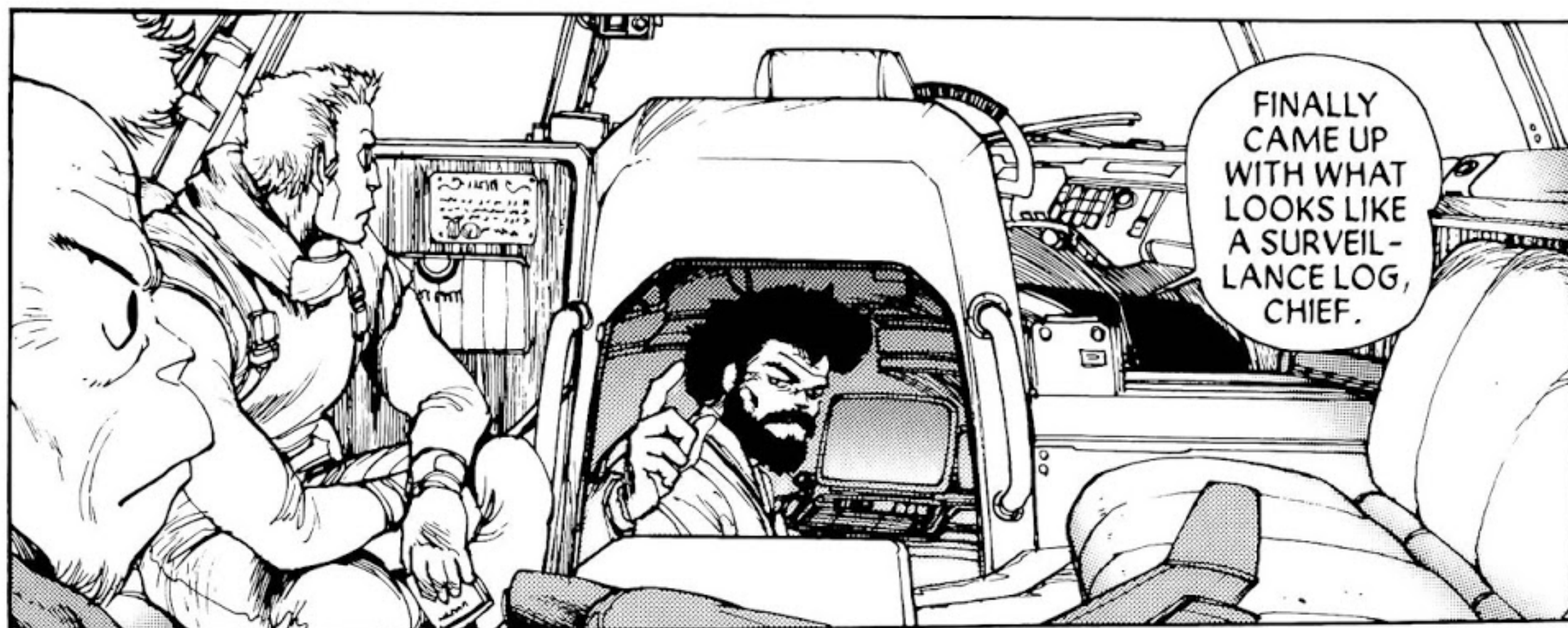














AS I RECALL IT, THE MINISTER'S BEEN RUNNING AROUND TRYING TO GET A BUNCHA CORPORATE HEADS TO FORM JOINT VENTURES WITH ISRAEL...



SO WE'VE GOT A NICE LONG LIST OF PEOPLE WHO'D LOVE TO SPONSOR HIS ASSASSINATION...



MAKES THE PALESTINIANS, SYRIANS, AND IRAQIS **ALL** LOOK SUSPICIOUS, YEAH?



AS USUAL...

STILL...IN THE REPORT, THAT KID THE MAJOR SHOT WAS LISTED AS THE LEADER OF THE GROUP... BUT HE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE AN ARAB.



SO WE START OUT TRACKING A HANDGUN, AND WIND UP WITH DRUGS, MONEY, AN ASSASSINATION SQUAD, AND THE WHOLE MIDDLE EAST MESS, EH?



LIKE USING A MINNOW FOR BAIT AND REELING IN A SHARK, YOU THINK?



ARAMAKI HERE, SIR.



YOU WATCHING CHANNEL 533, ARAMAKI?

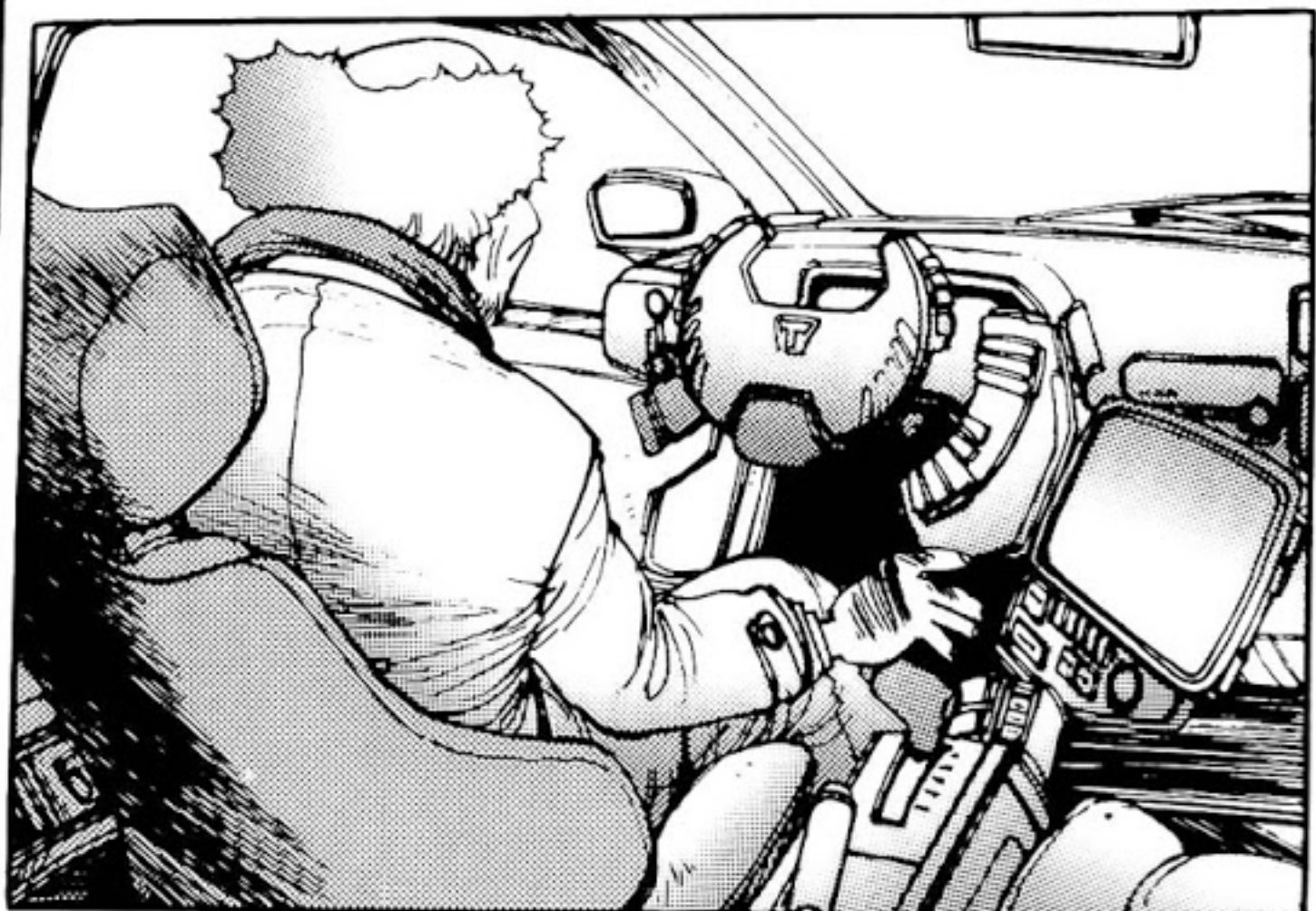


beep

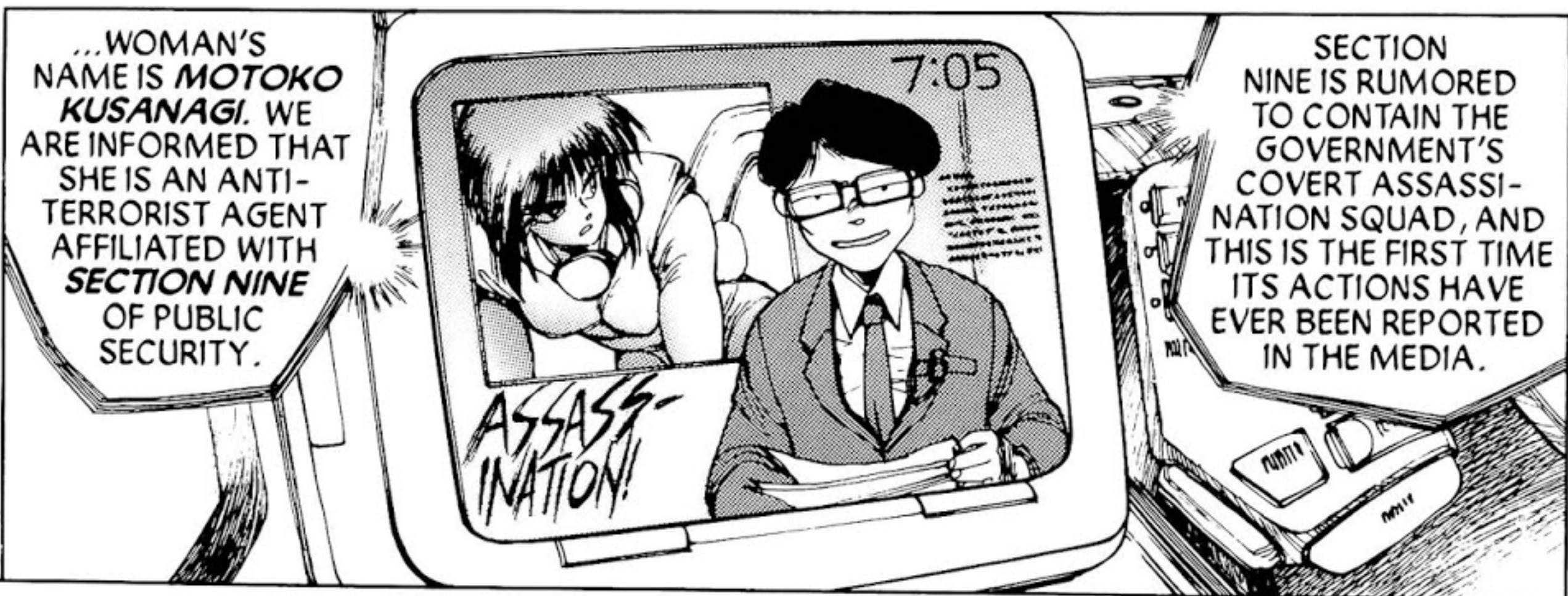
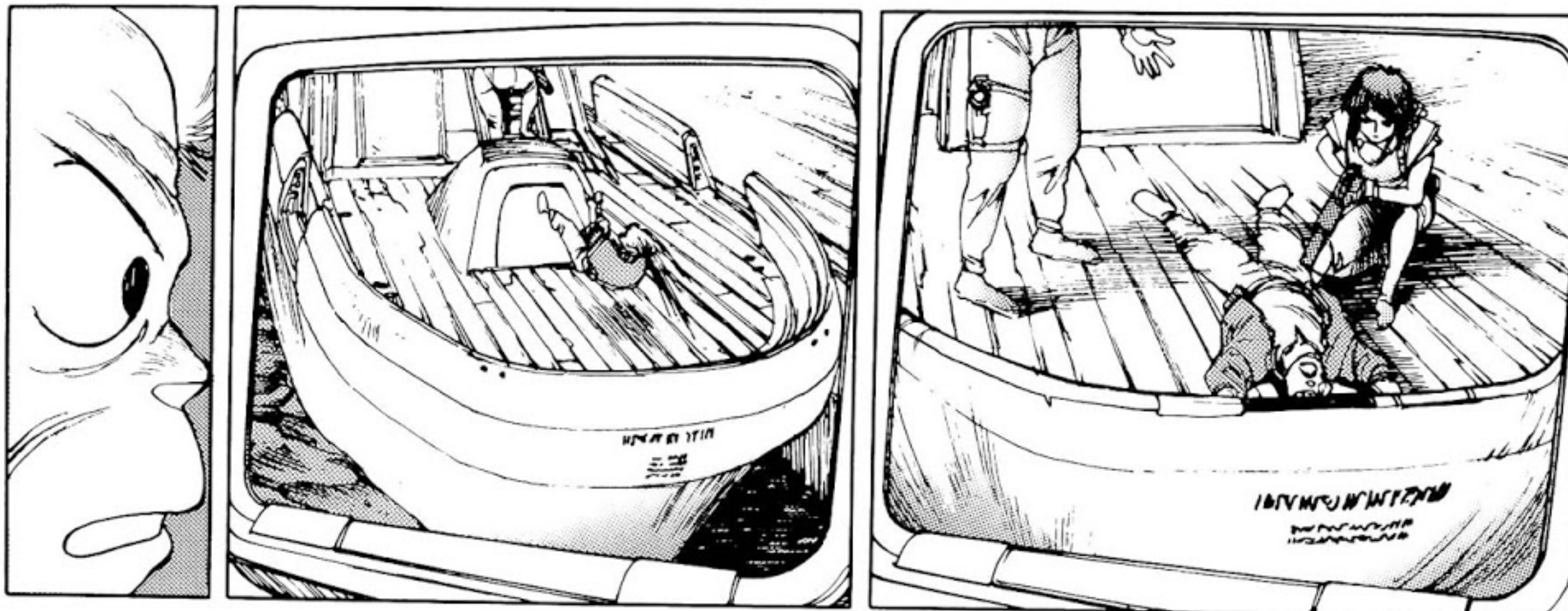


NO, SIR...

YOU'D BETTER START!



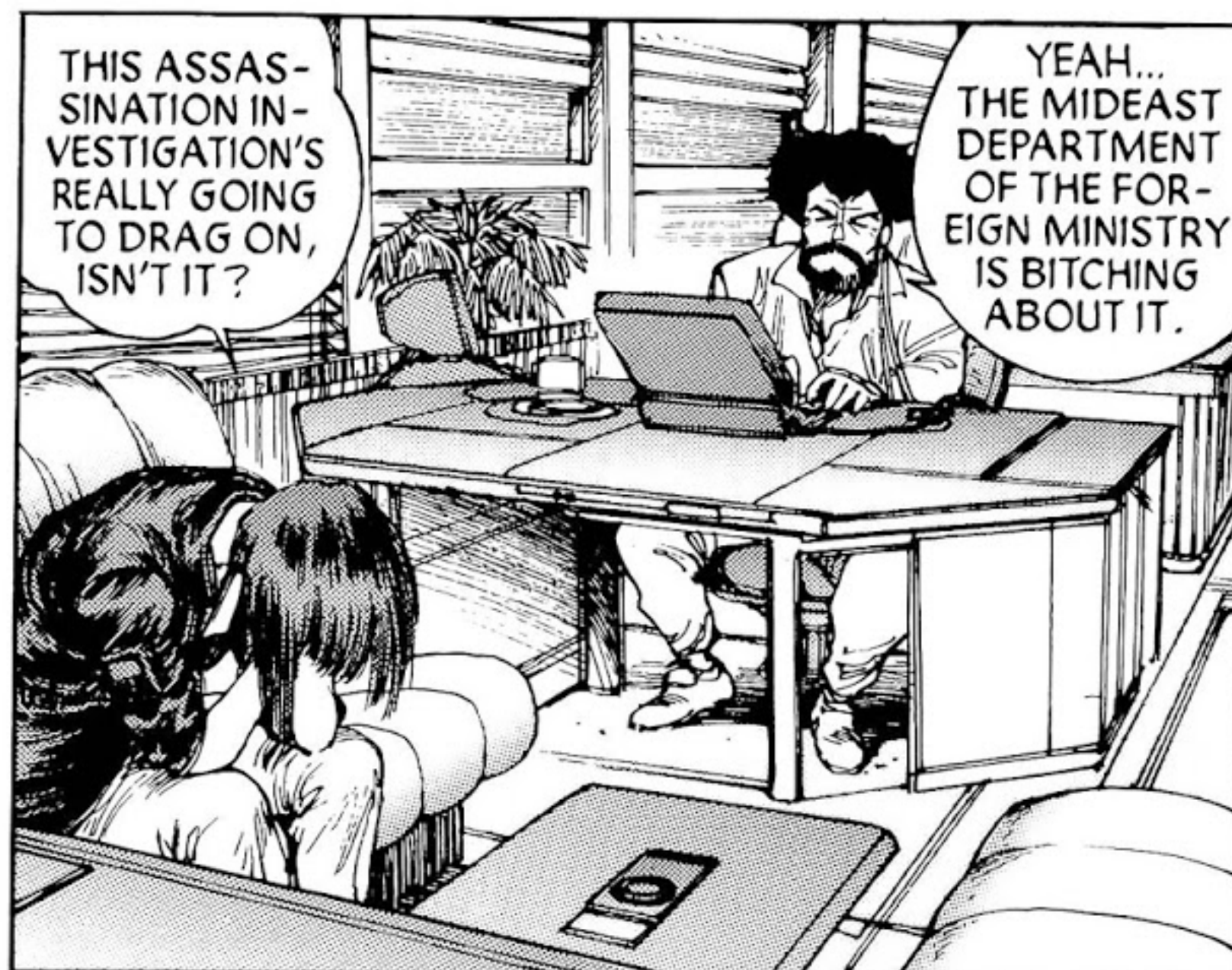












THIS ASSASSINATION INVESTIGATION'S REALLY GOING TO DRAG ON, ISN'T IT?

YEAH... THE MIDEAST DEPARTMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS BITCHING ABOUT IT.

I JUST WONDER WHO LEAKED THE INFORMATION ON THE OP-- WHO TIPPED OFF THE MEDIA?

WELL, ALL WE KNOW IS IT WASN'T THE ASSASSINATION TEAM.



YO! WE'RE BACK... HOW 'BOUT A BIG WELCOME?!



DAMN FOREIGN MINISTRY'S GONE AUTISTIC ON US EVER SINCE THAT AFFAIR WITH THE PUPPETEER.

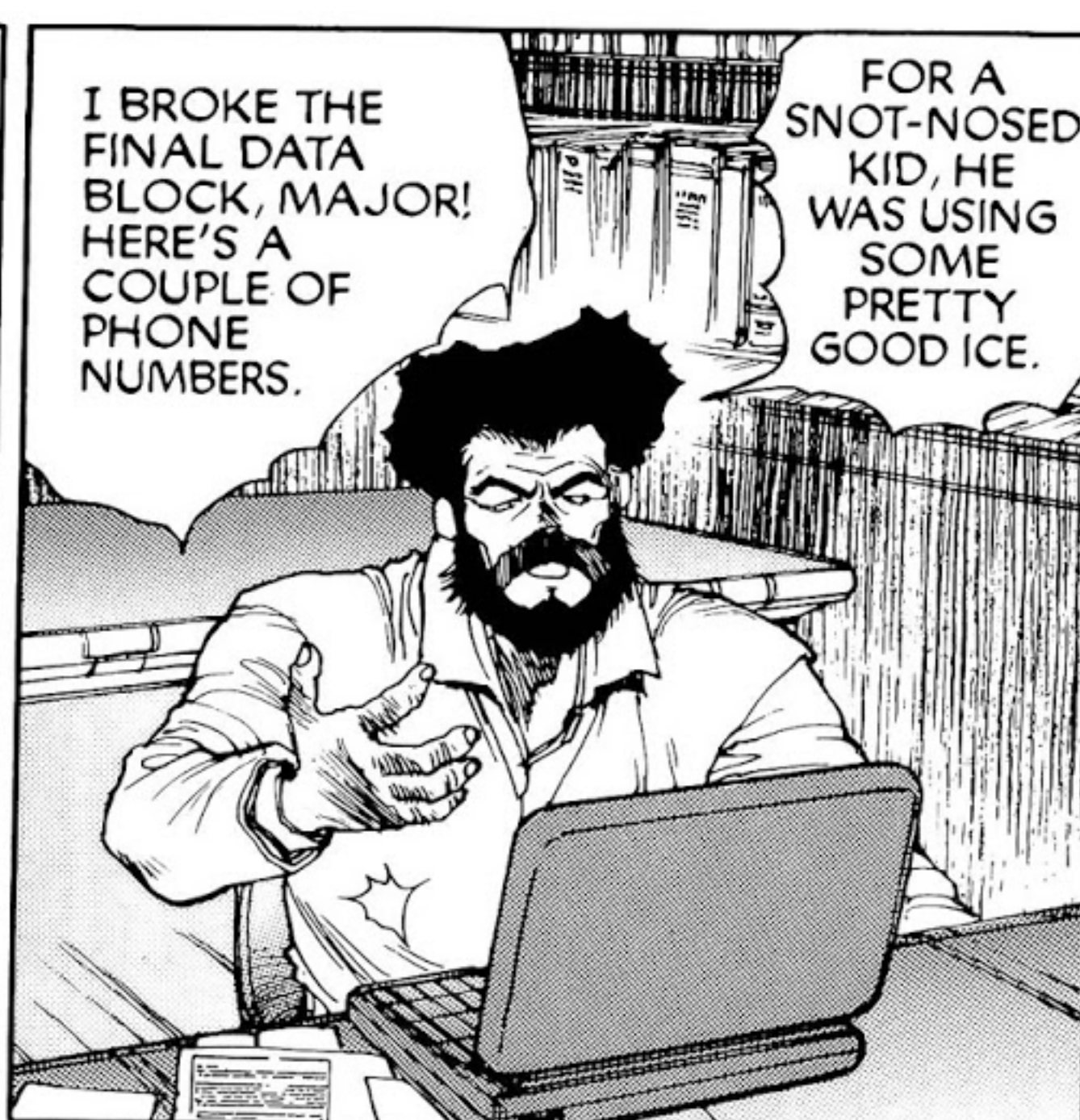
THEY WERE PLANNING TO USE SECTION SIX TO GUARD THE TRADE TREATY DELIBERATIONS WITH ISRAEL NEXT WEEK.



AND IT SAYS ON THE BOX THAT THE PARENTS OF THE KID YOU SHOT ARE PLANNING TO SUE YOU, KUSANAGI.



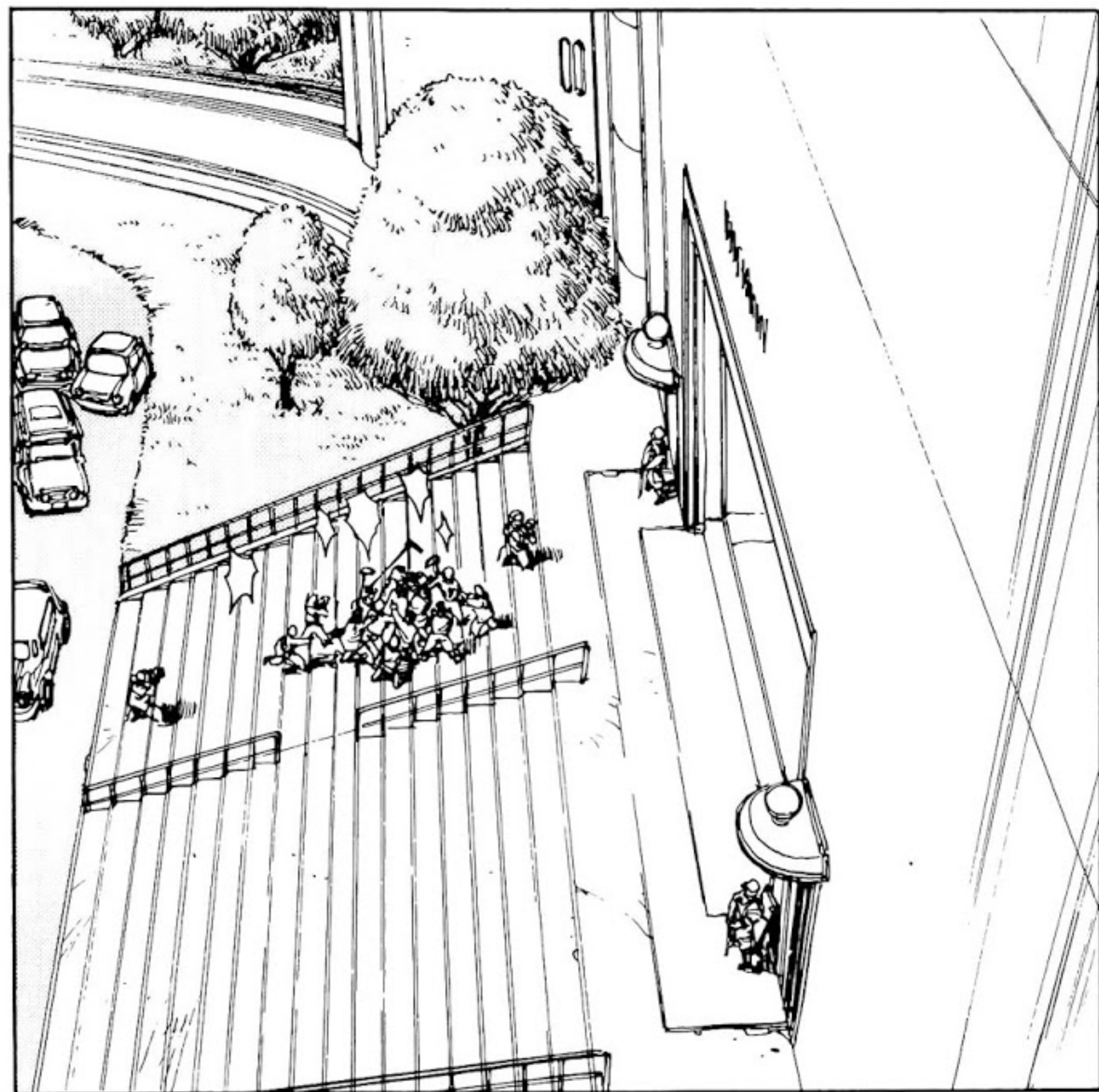
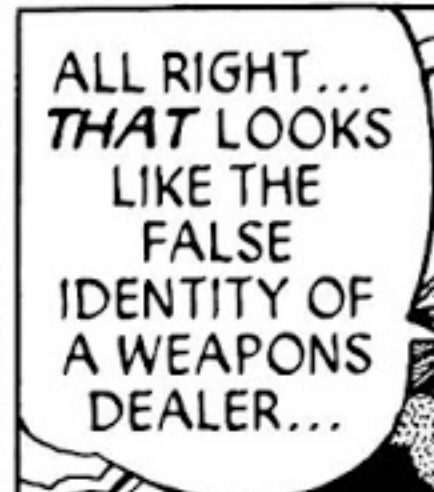
*Sighh...*



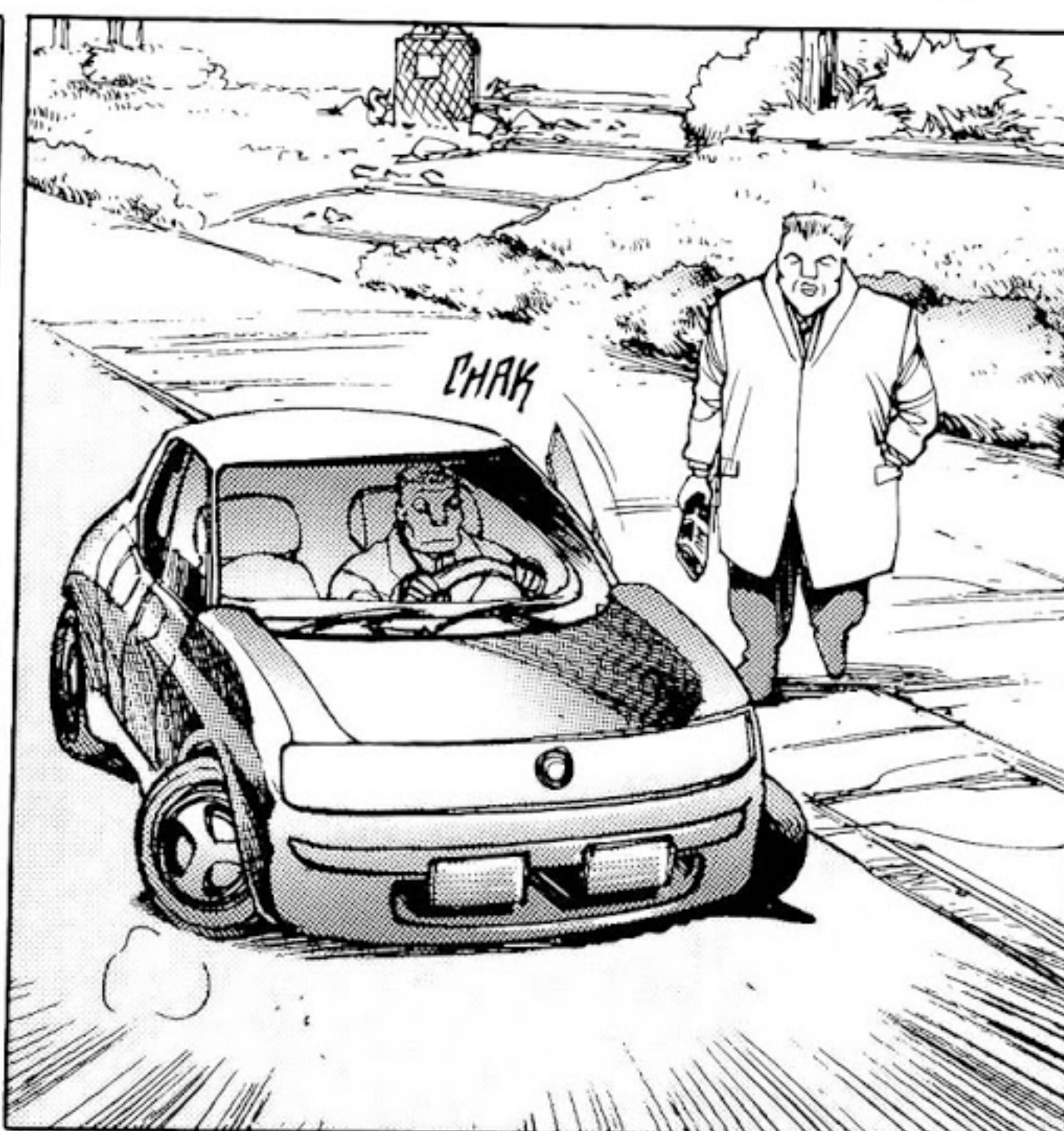
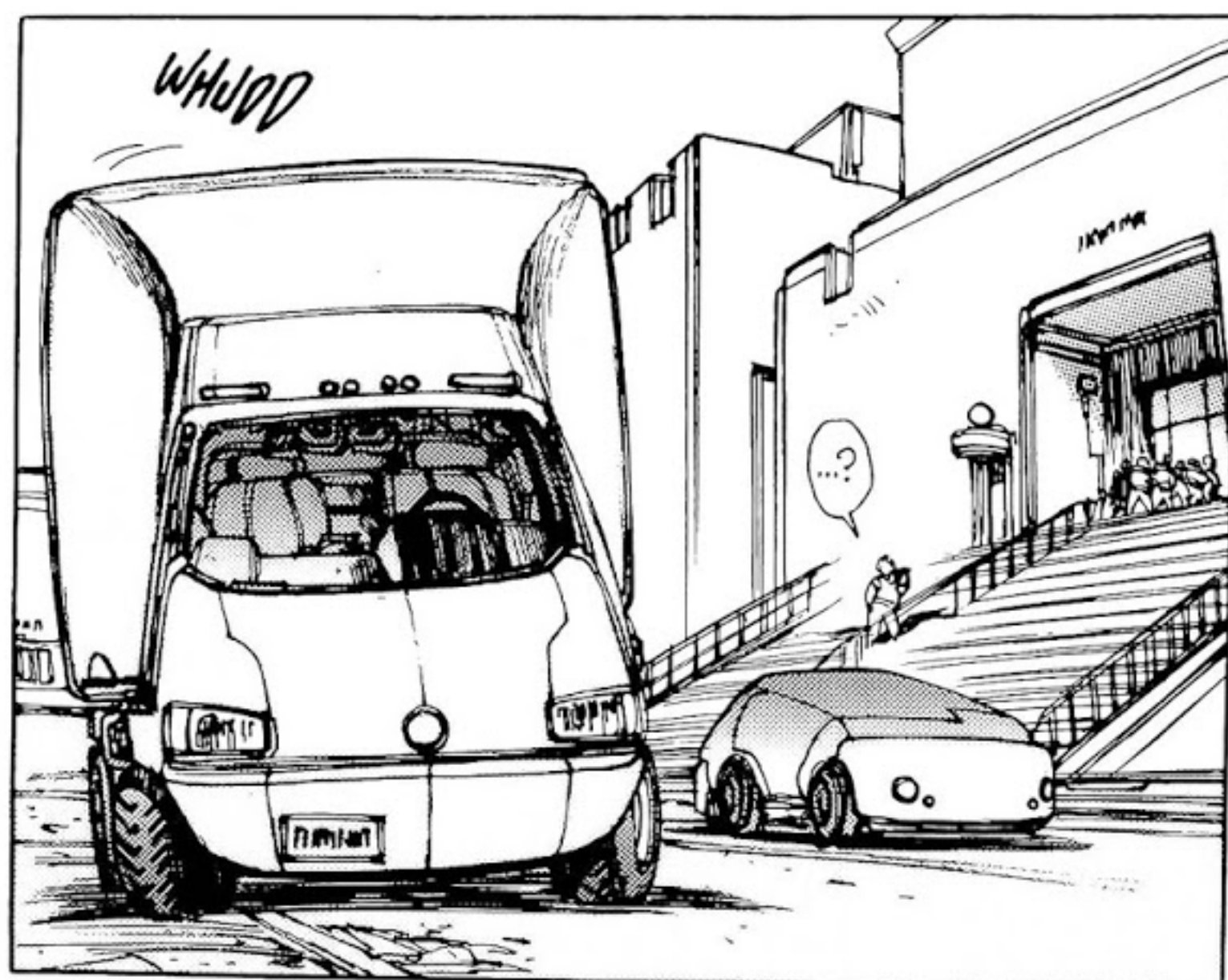
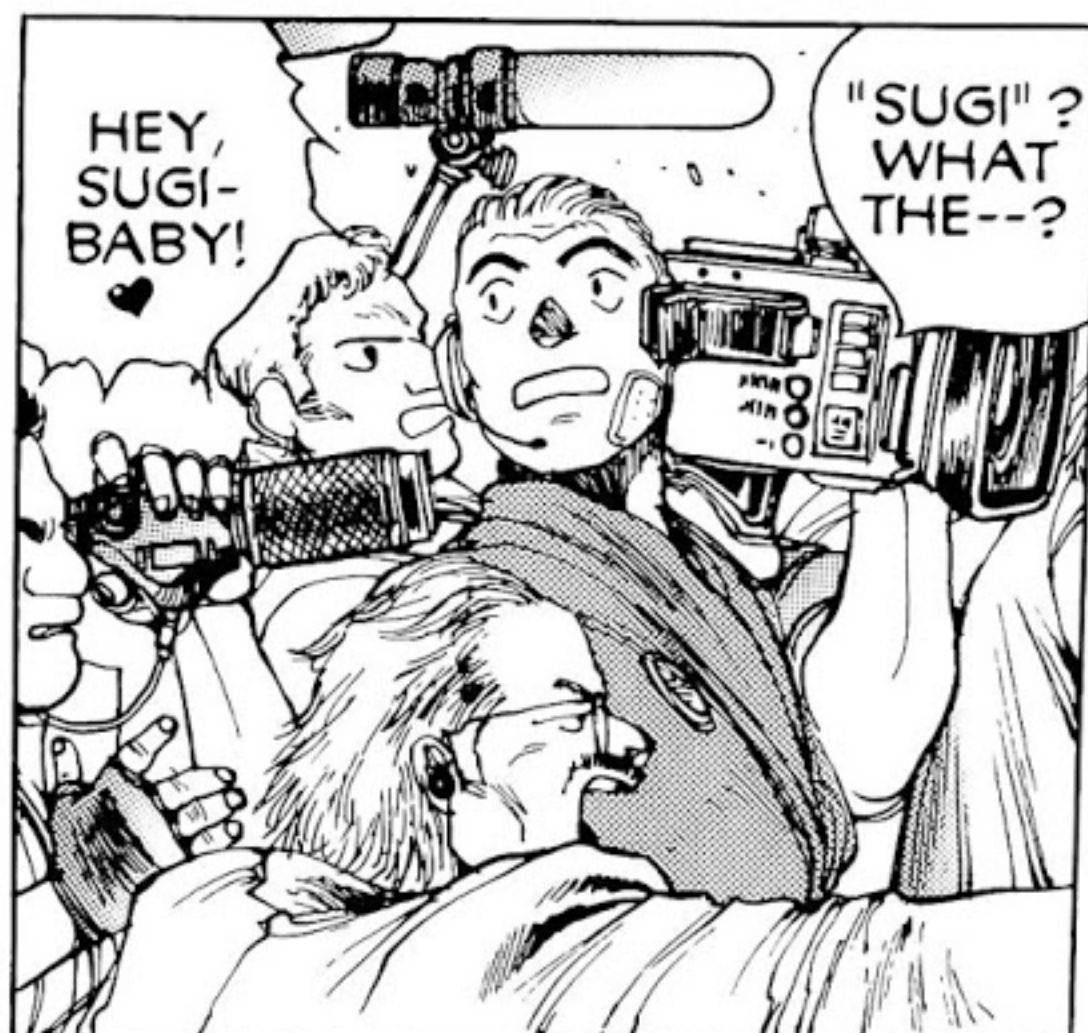
I BROKE THE FINAL DATA BLOCK, MAJOR! HERE'S A COUPLE OF PHONE NUMBERS.

FOR A SNOT-NOSED KID, HE WAS USING SOME PRETTY GOOD ICE.

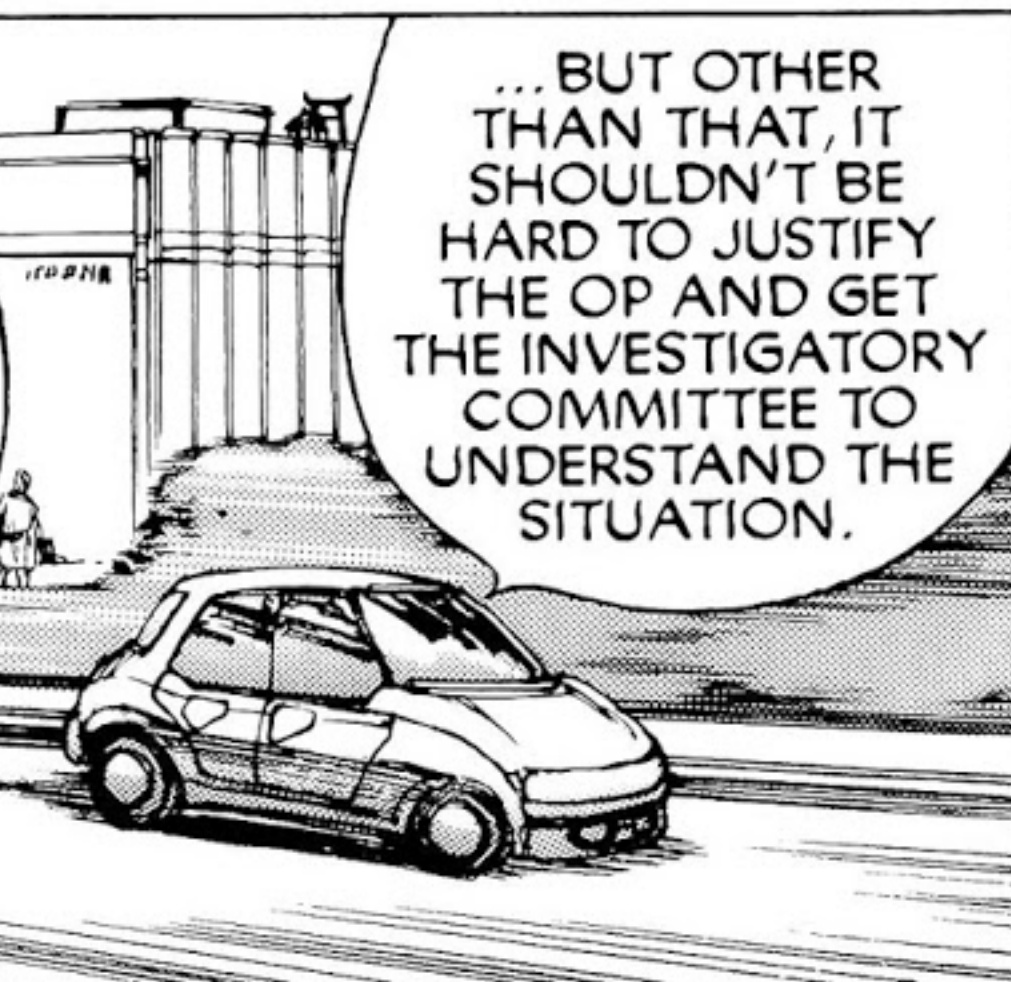
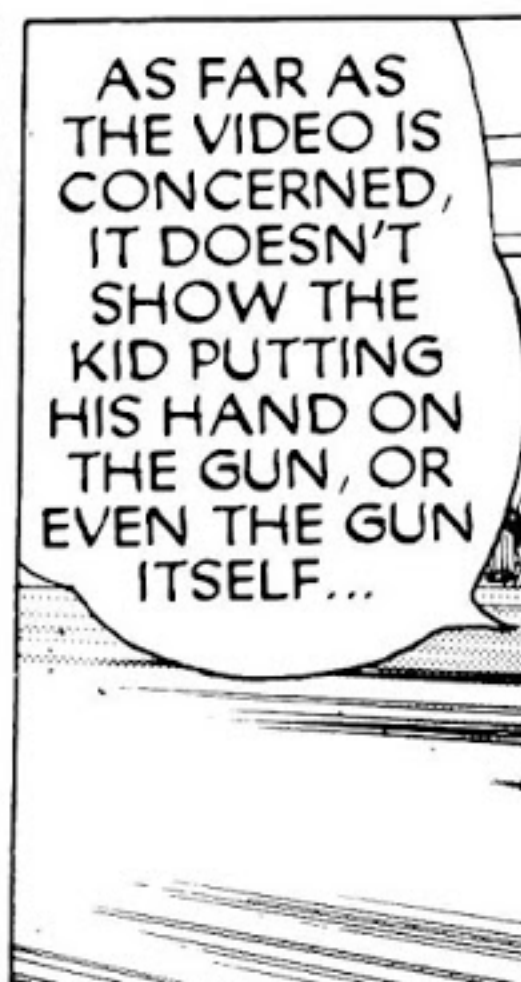




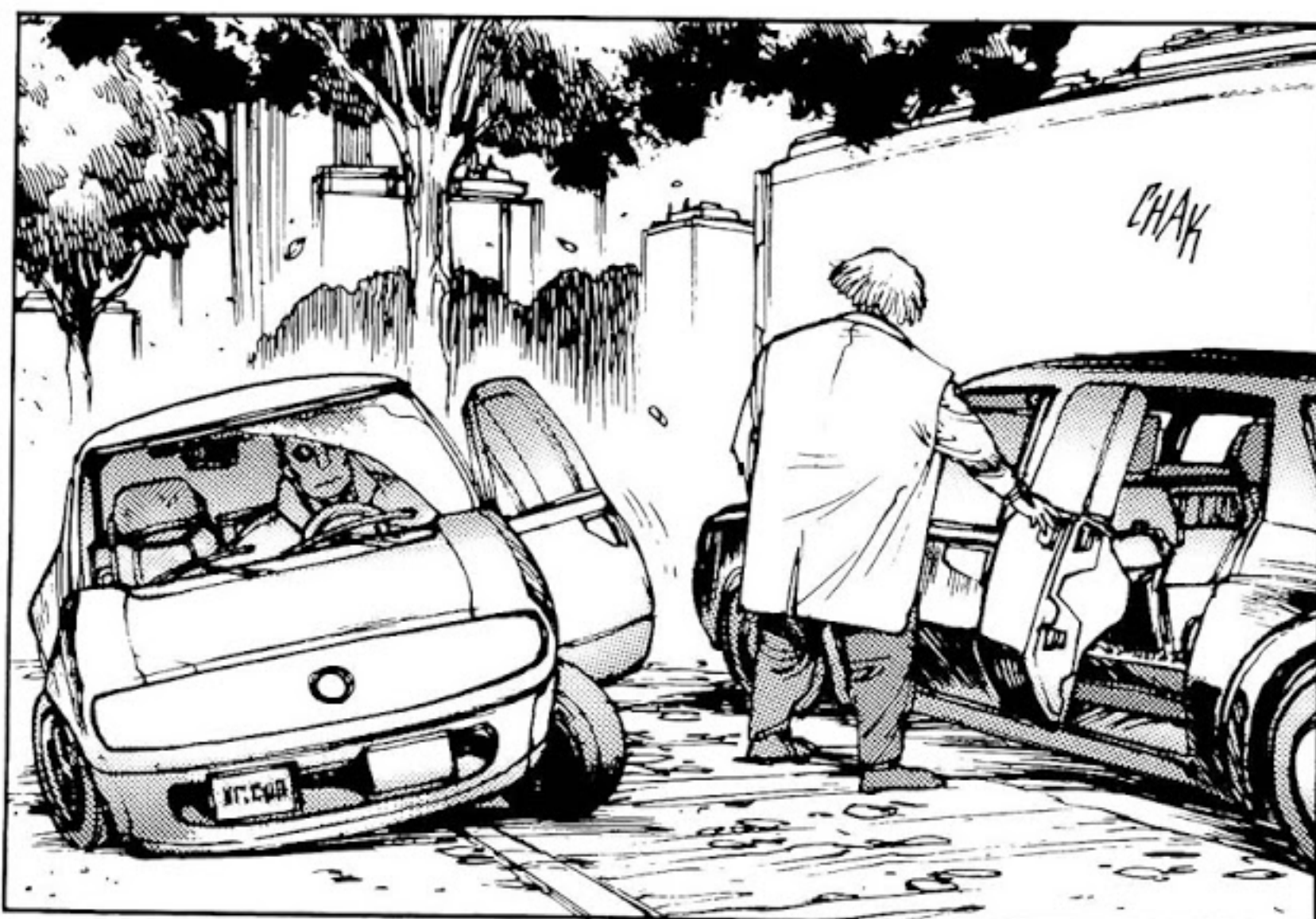
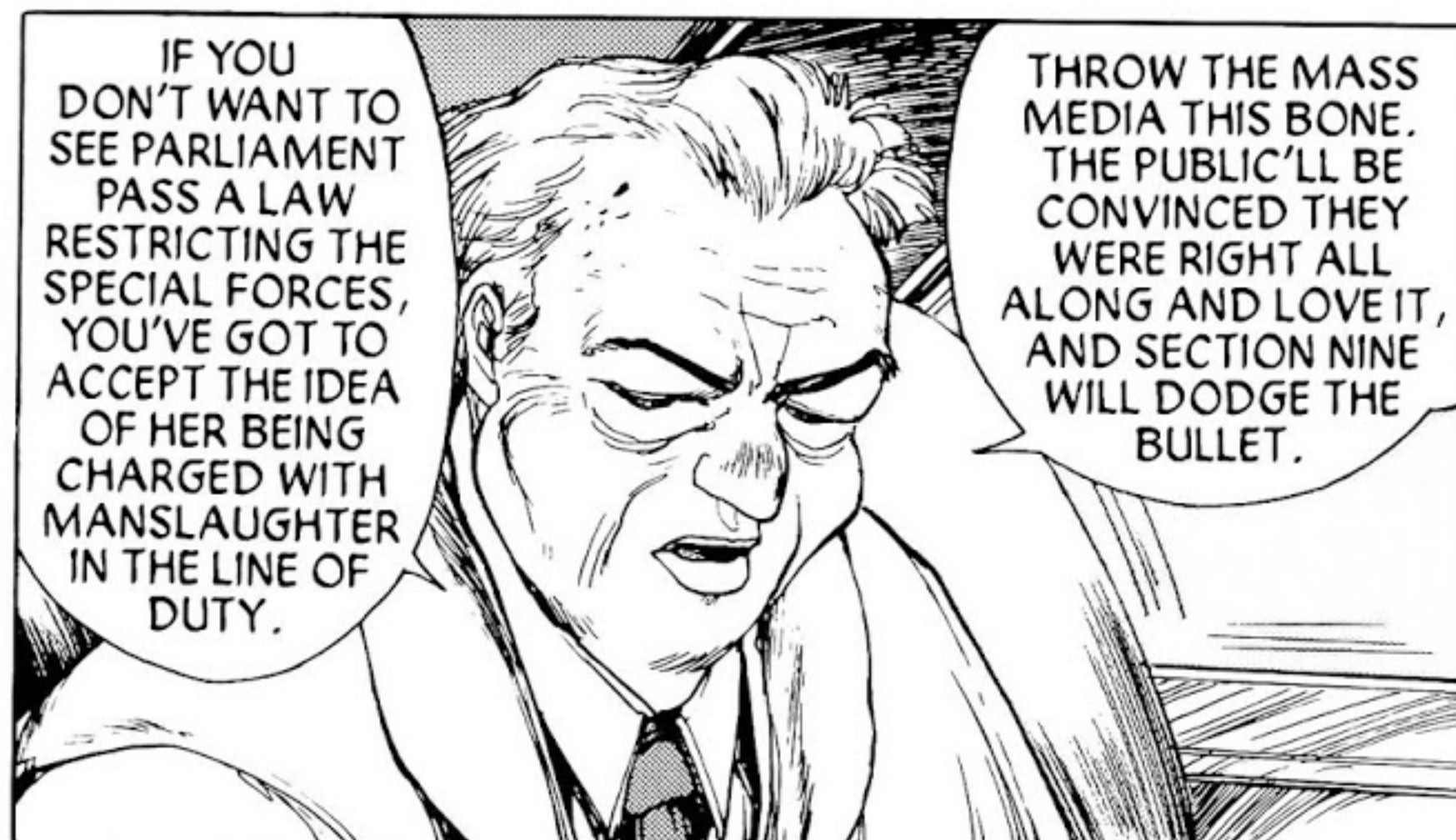




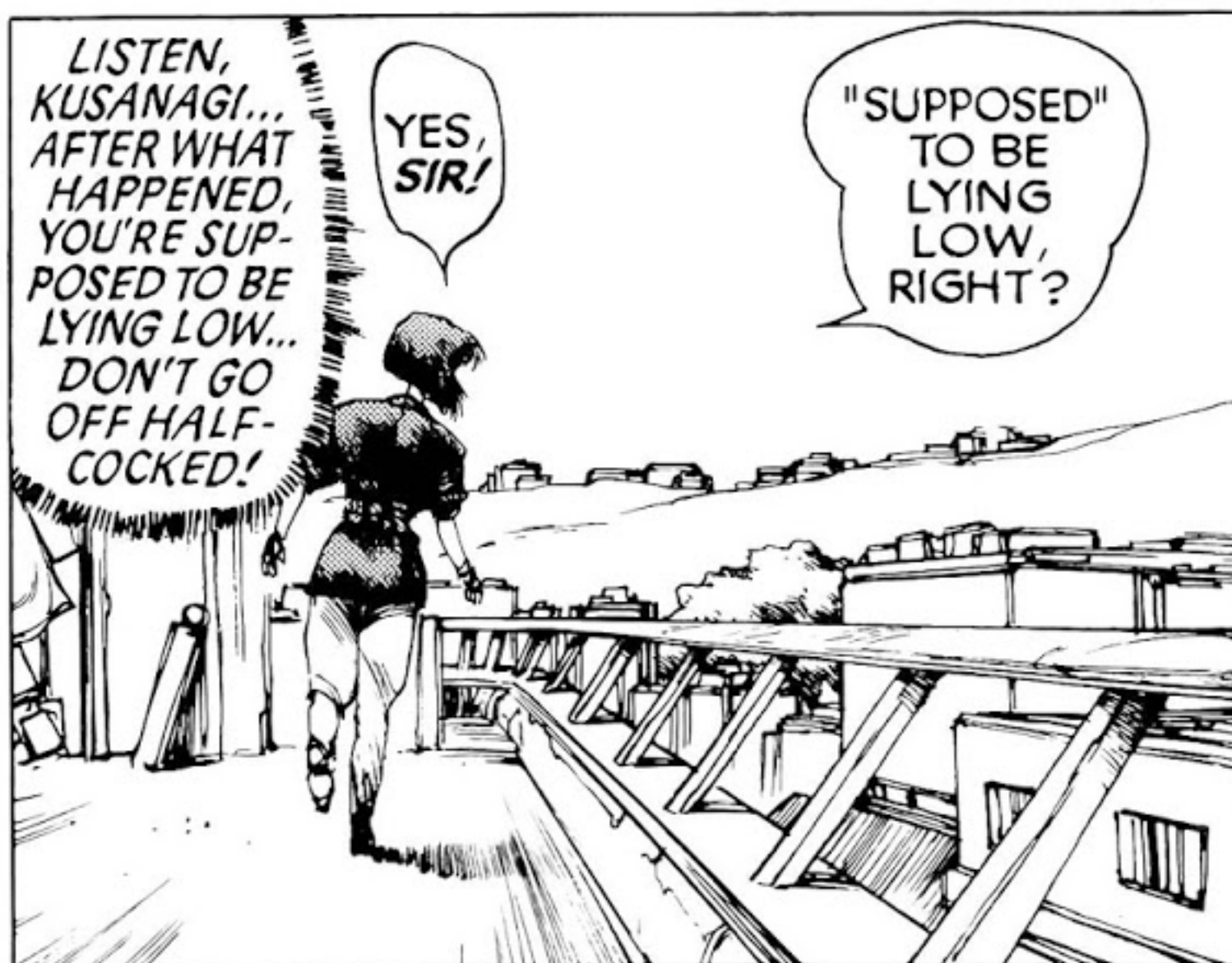
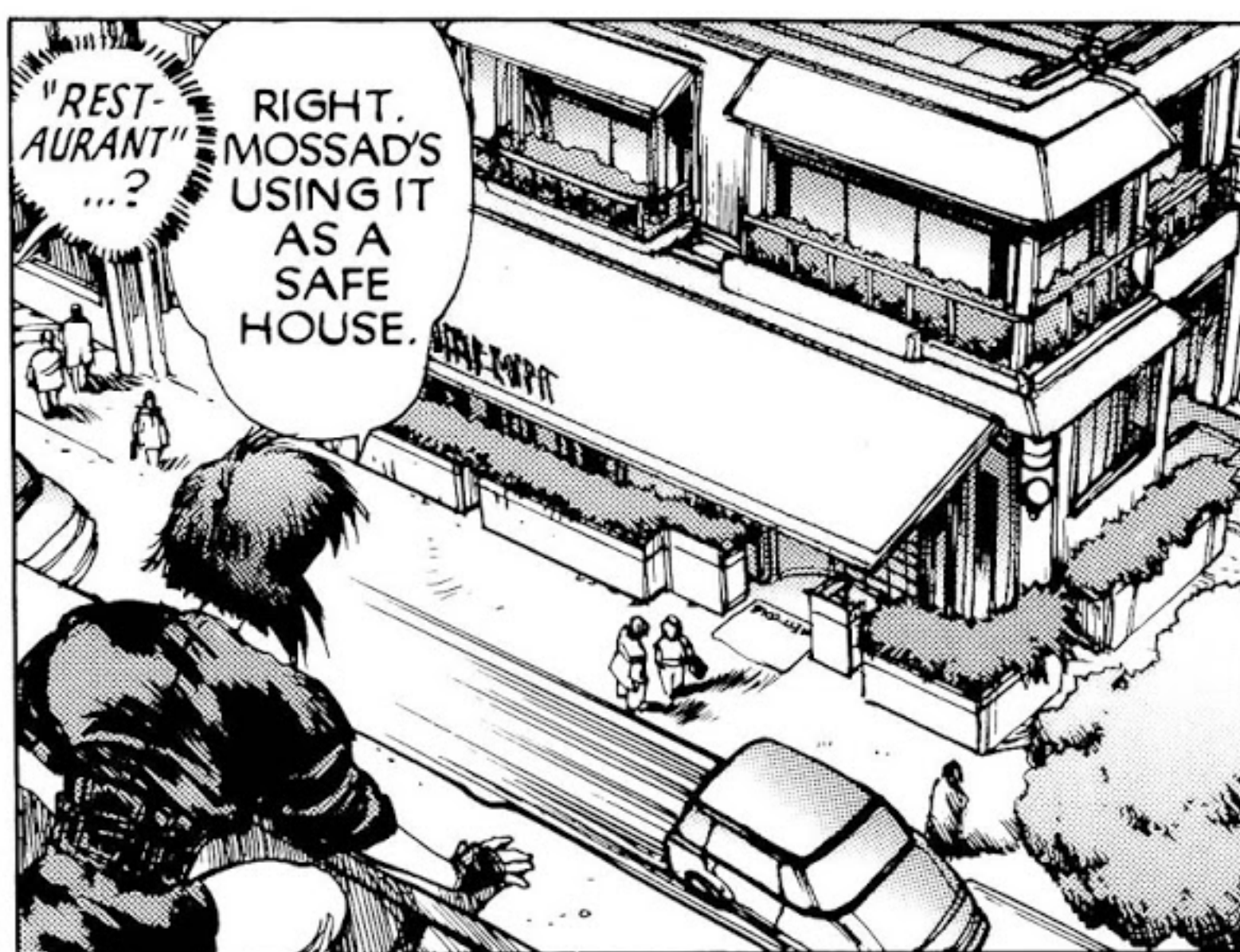














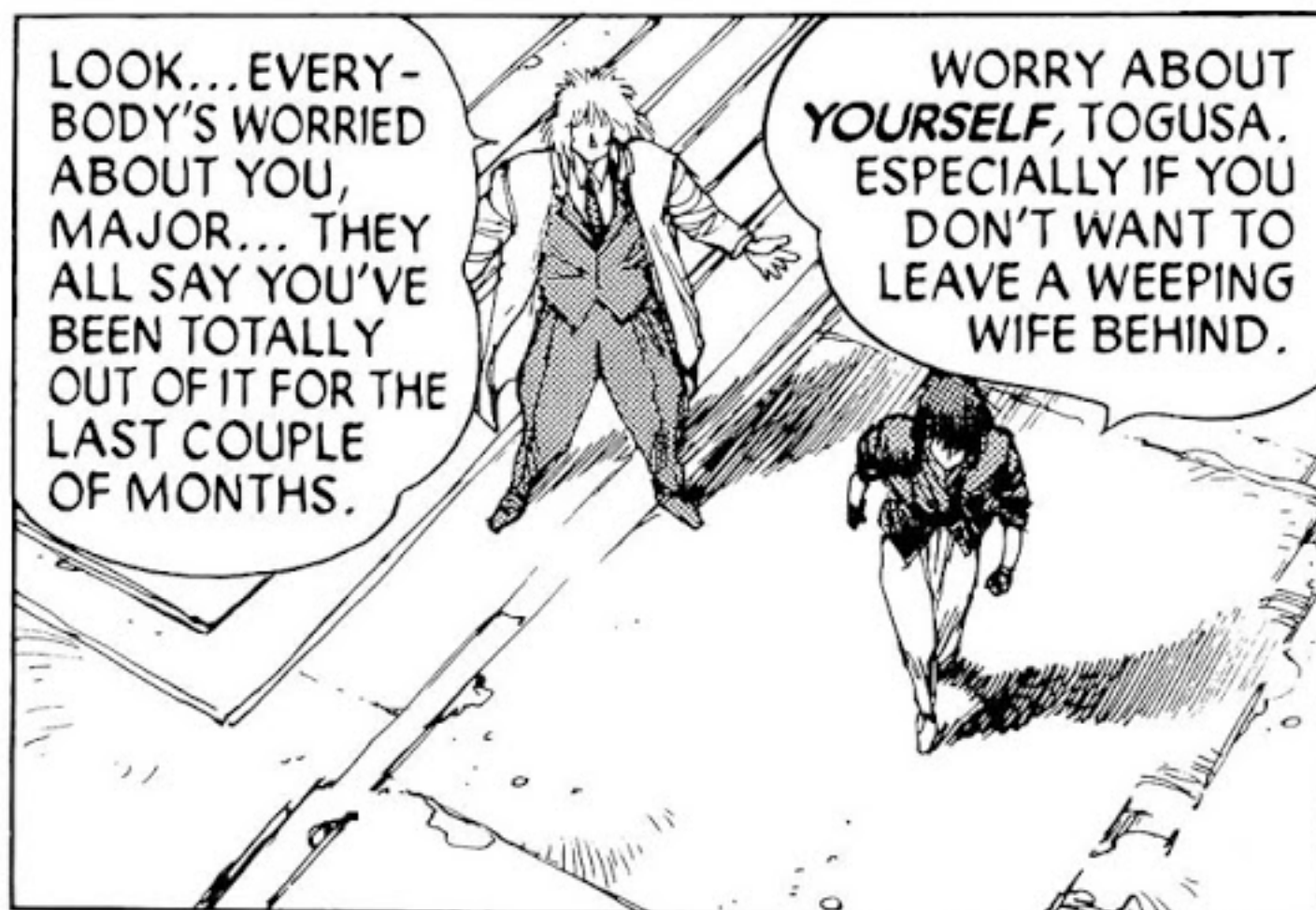


HEY,  
TOGUSA--  
YOU LOSE  
YOUR  
TEXT-  
BOOK?



YOU  
UNDERSTAND  
WHAT IT MEANS  
WHEN THE CHIEF  
TELLS YOU TO  
TAIL ME, RIGHT?

WHY  
ME,  
LORD?



LOOK...EVERY-  
BODY'S WORRIED  
ABOUT YOU,  
MAJOR... THEY  
ALL SAY YOU'VE  
BEEN TOTALLY  
OUT OF IT FOR THE  
LAST COUPLE  
OF MONTHS.

WORRY ABOUT  
*YOURSELF*, TOGUSA.  
ESPECIALLY IF YOU  
DON'T WANT TO  
LEAVE A WEEPING  
WIFE BEHIND.



SO  
WHAT'RE  
YOU  
GONNA  
DO?



FOLLOW  
THE LAWS  
OF THERMO-  
DYNAMICS.



FIRST OF  
ALL, I PLAN  
TO RENEW MY  
ACQUAINTANCE  
WITH AN OLD  
FRIEND WHO'S  
INFILTRATED  
MOSSAD.



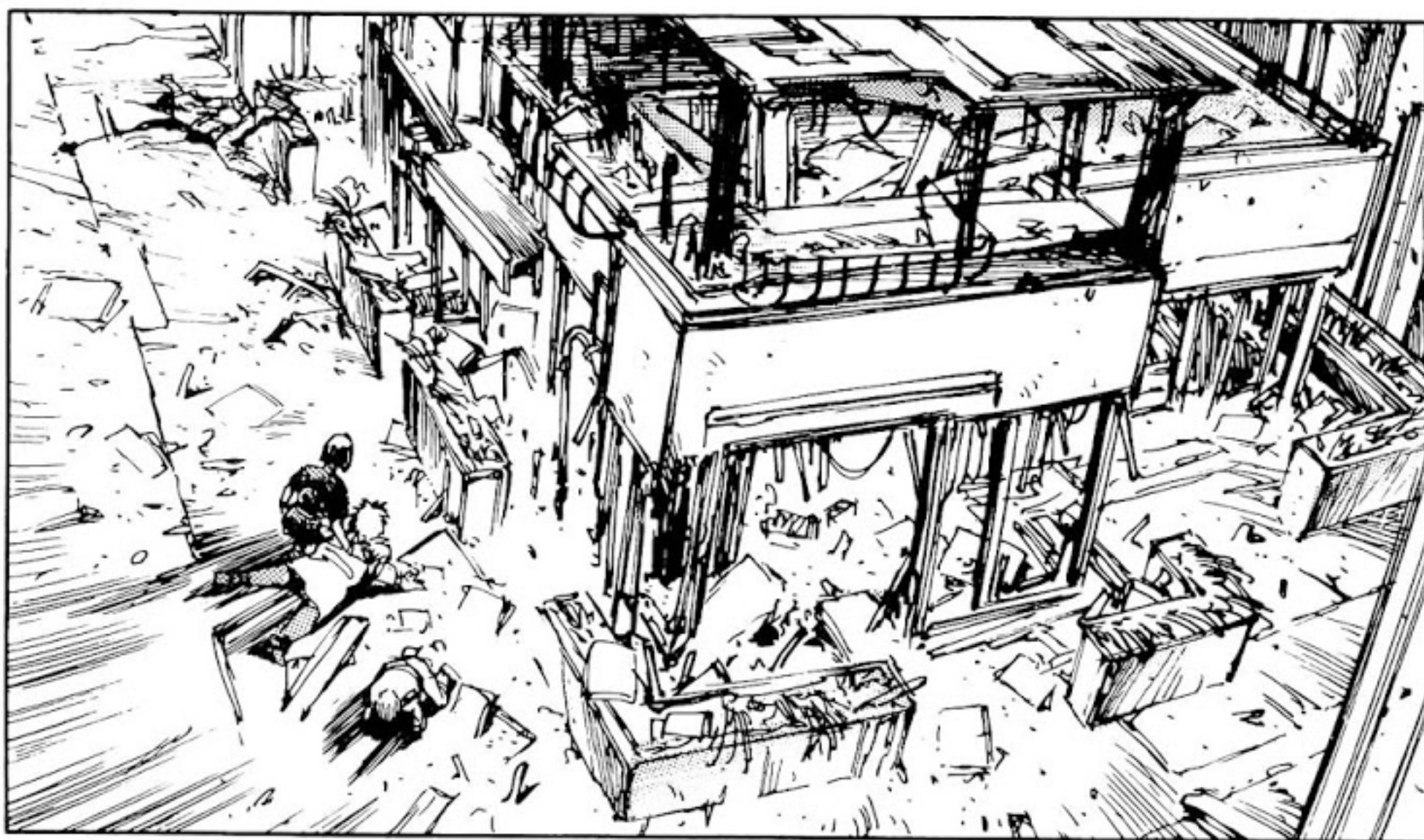
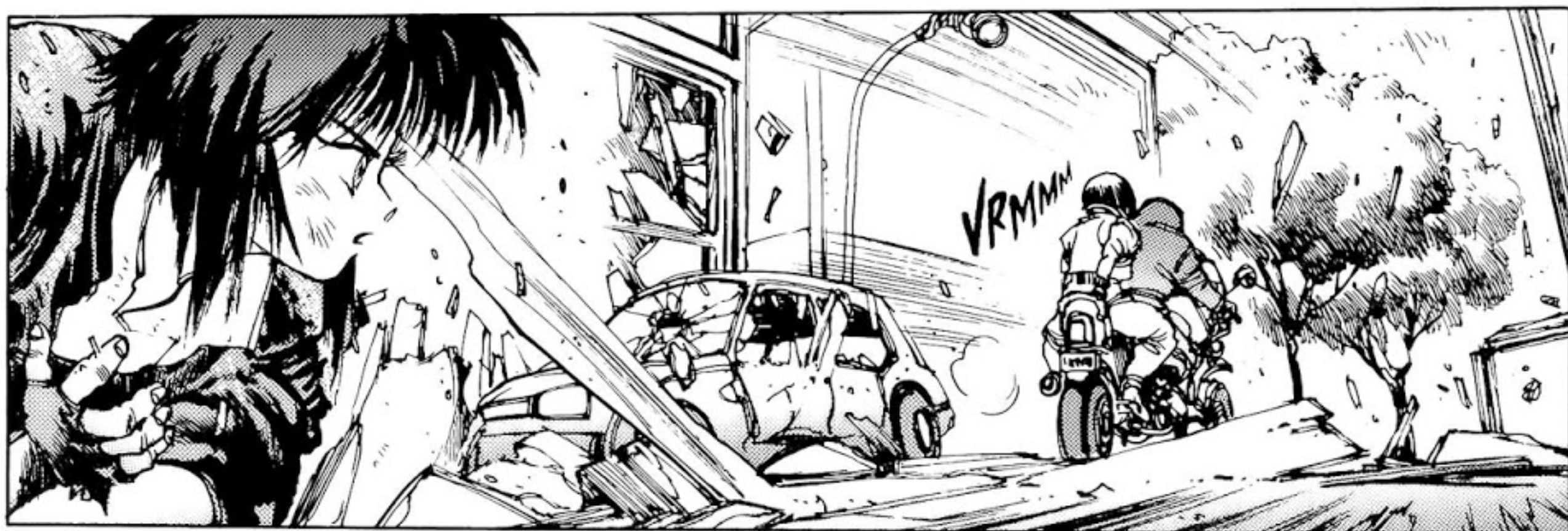
AN "OLD  
FRIEND"  
...?

RIGHT.  
*SHAPIRO*, A  
RUSSIAN JEW  
FROM THE  
K. G. B.

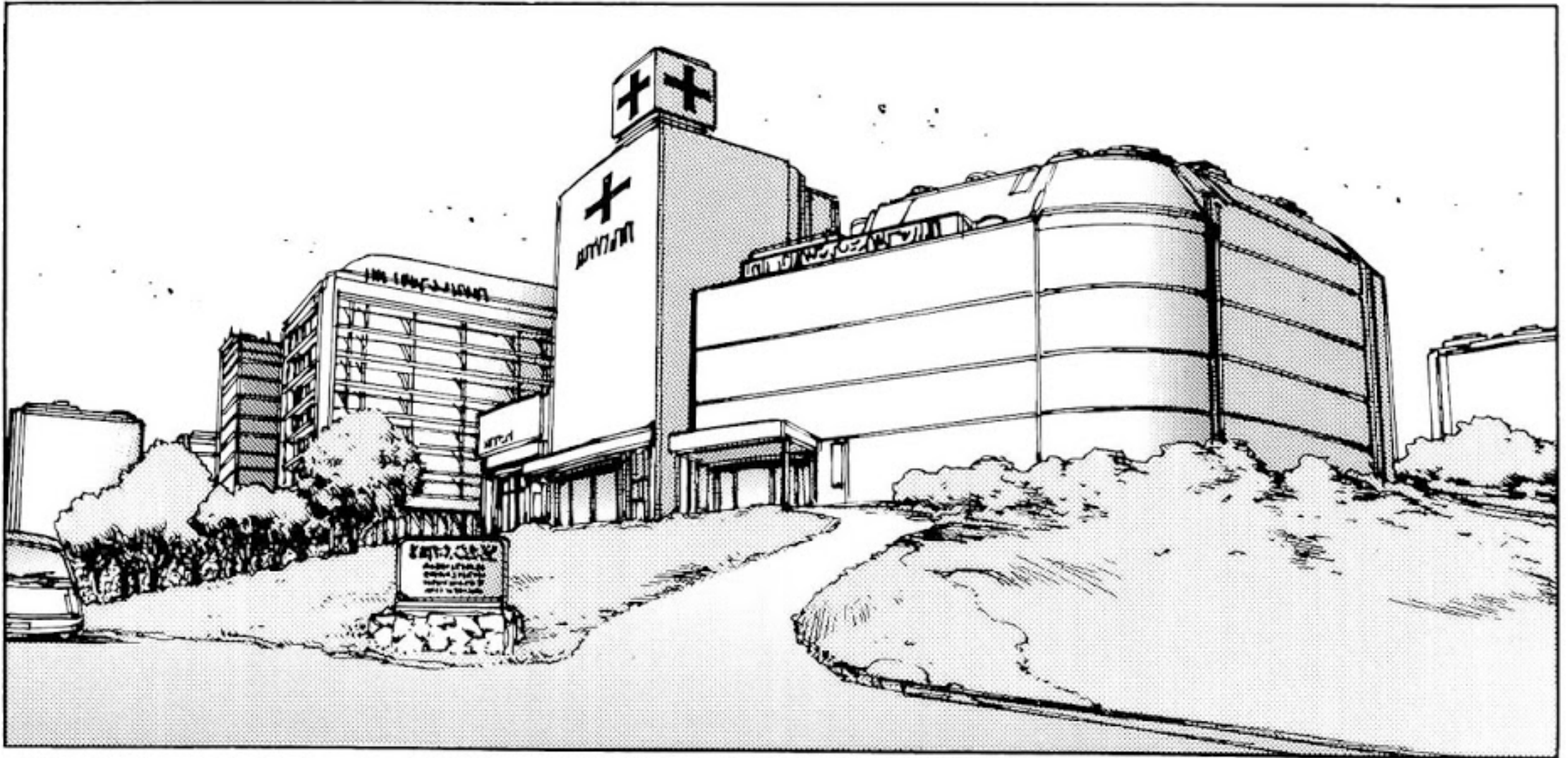






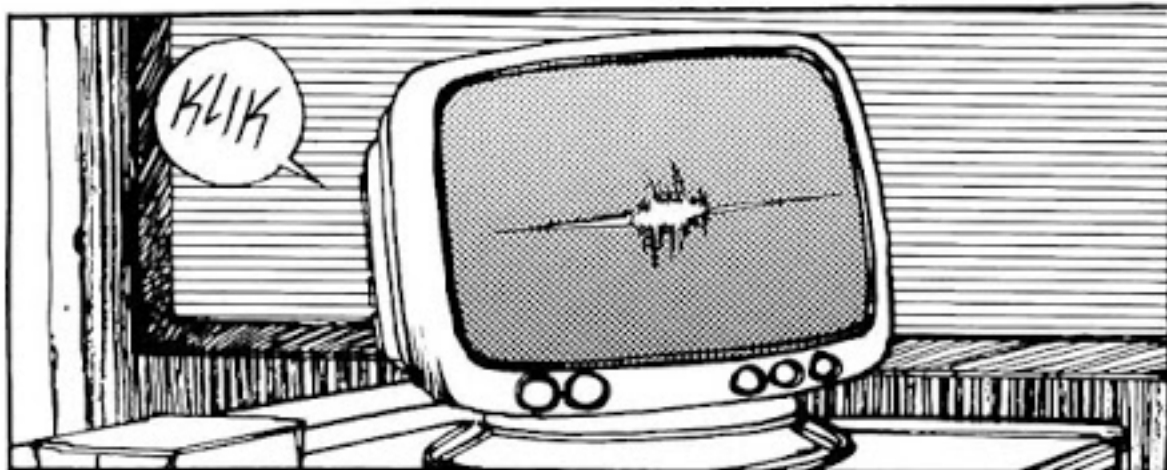






THE ANTI-ZIONIST ORGANIZATION HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT CLAIMING CREDIT FOR THE BOMBING OF THIS RESTAURANT.

THE TWELVE JEWISH EMPLOYEES OF THE RESTAURANT ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN THE TARGET OF THE ATTACK.... NEXT IN THE NEWS--



DAMN. THEY GOT THE JUMP ON US...

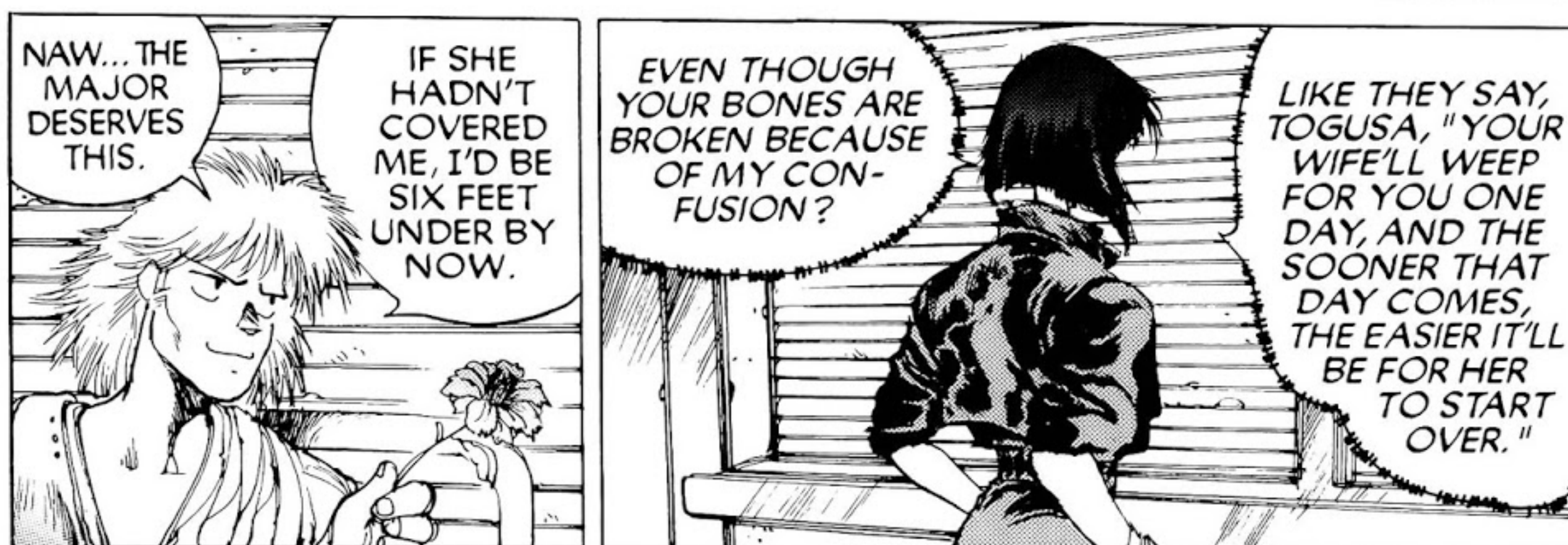
THE WHOLE THING'S A SETUP, TOGUSA. BUT NOW IT'S NOT SO IMPORTANT FOR US TO USE THE SYRIAN CARD WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ANYMORE...

A "SETUP" ...?

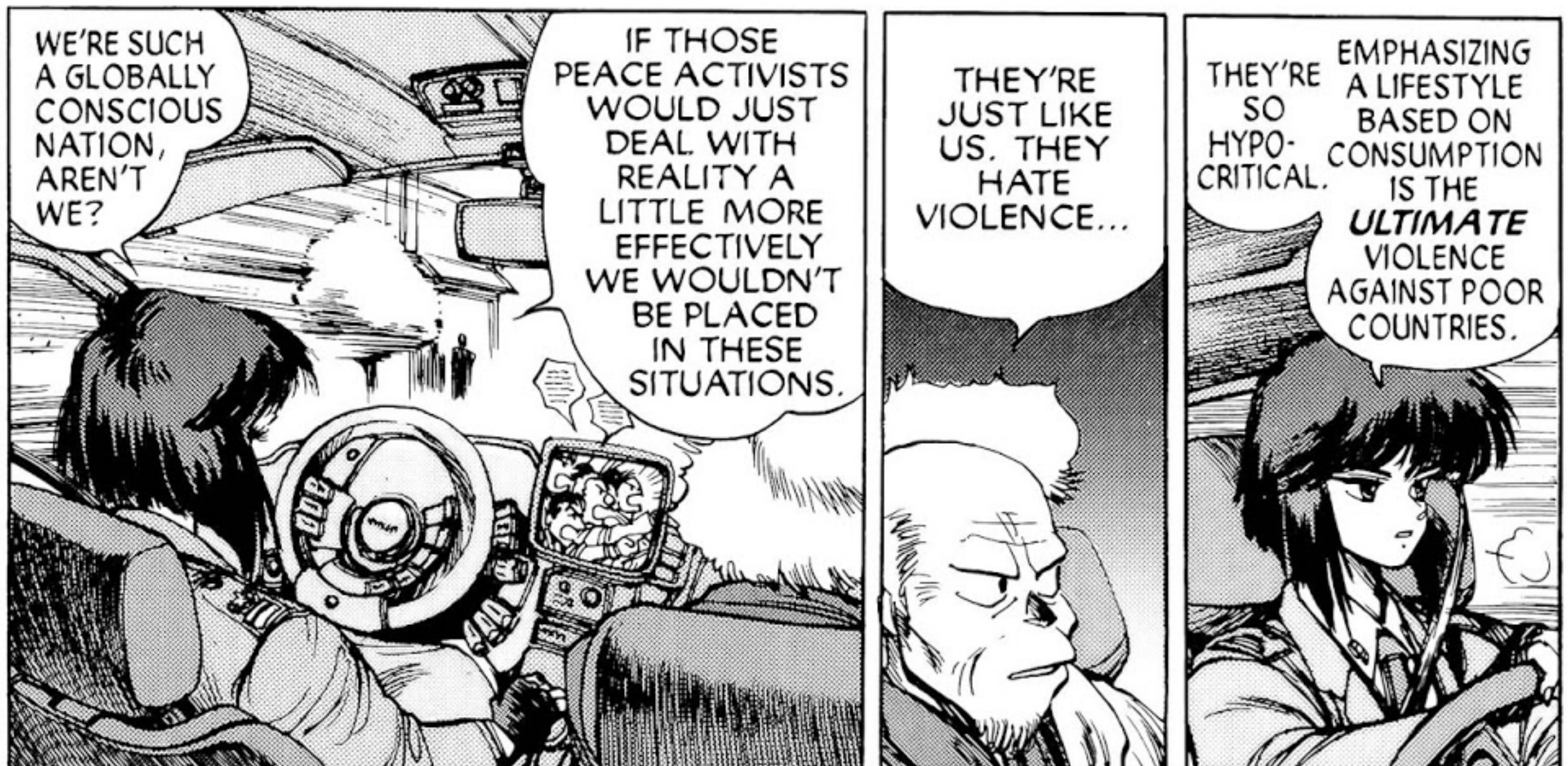
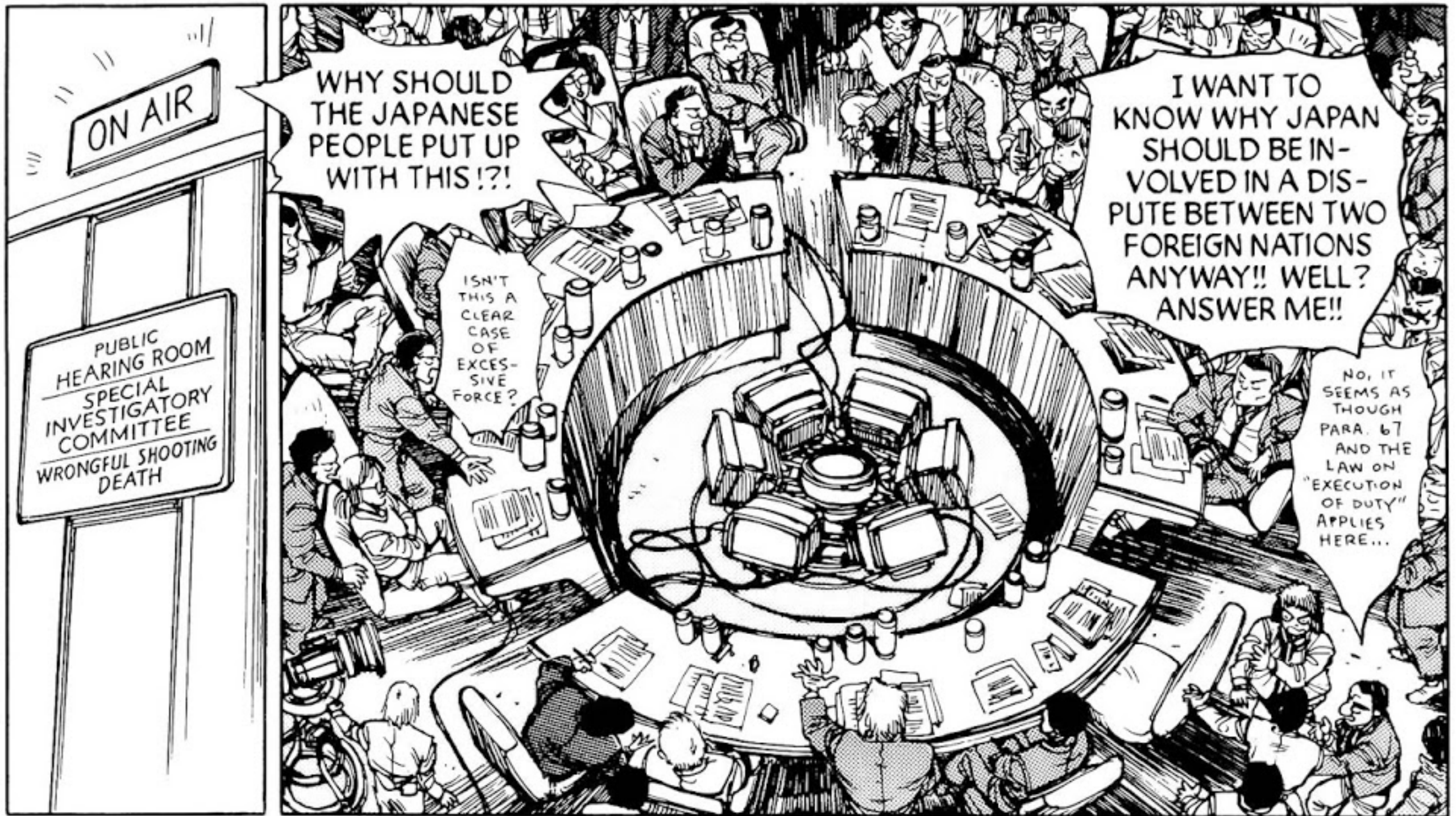
RIGHT. WHY SHOULD THEY JUST BLOW YOU UP WHEN THEY'RE AIMING FOR A DIFFERENT TARGET?

SHAPIRO TRIPPED LIKE THAT TO HELP US AND DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF THE SOVIET UNION.

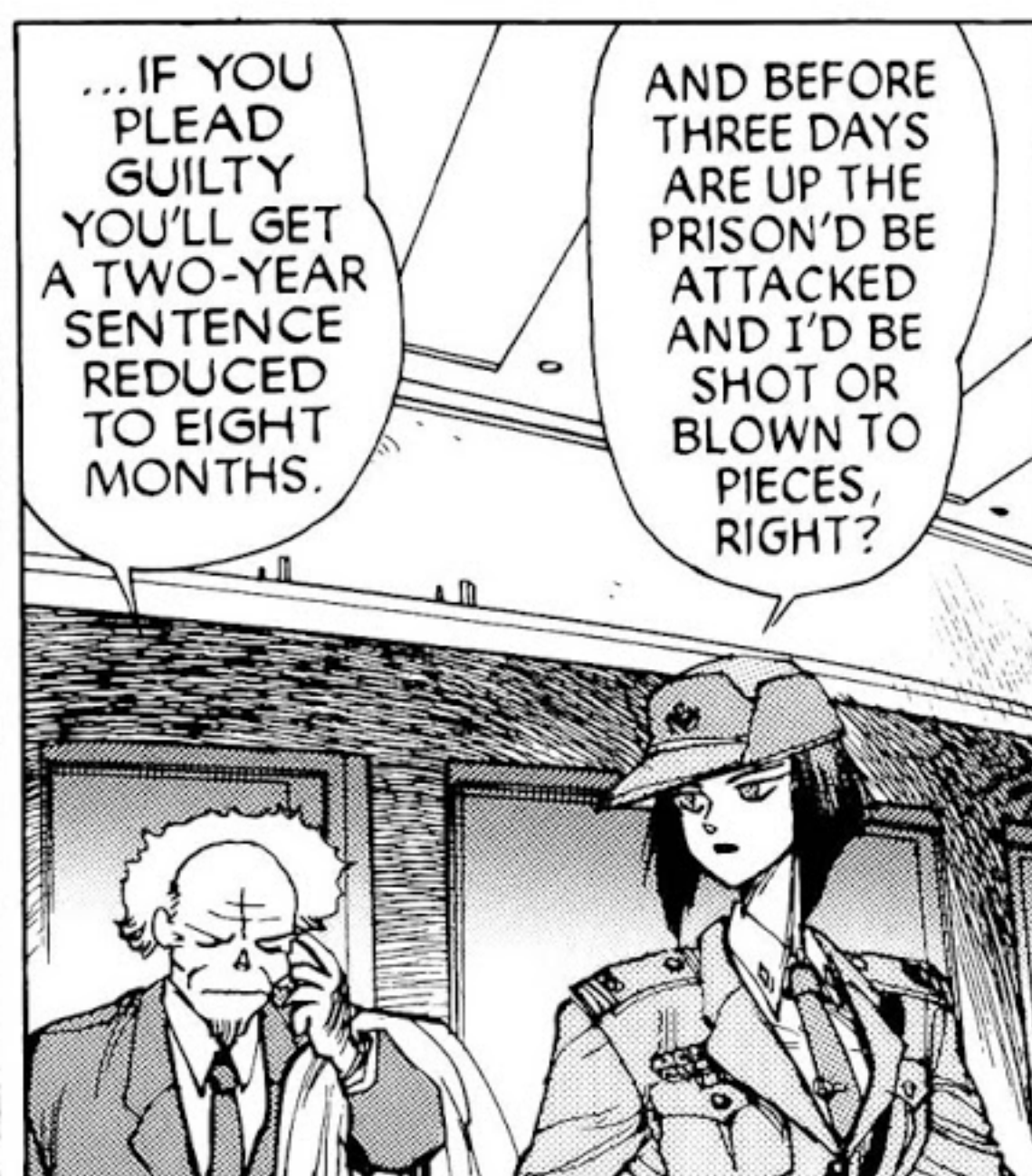
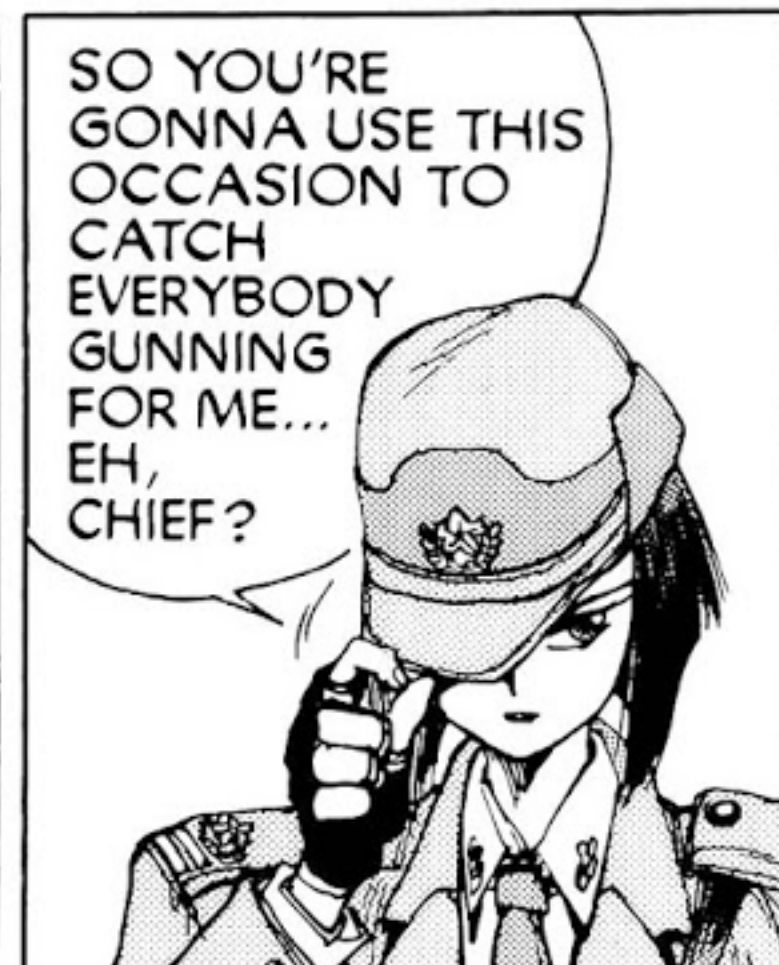
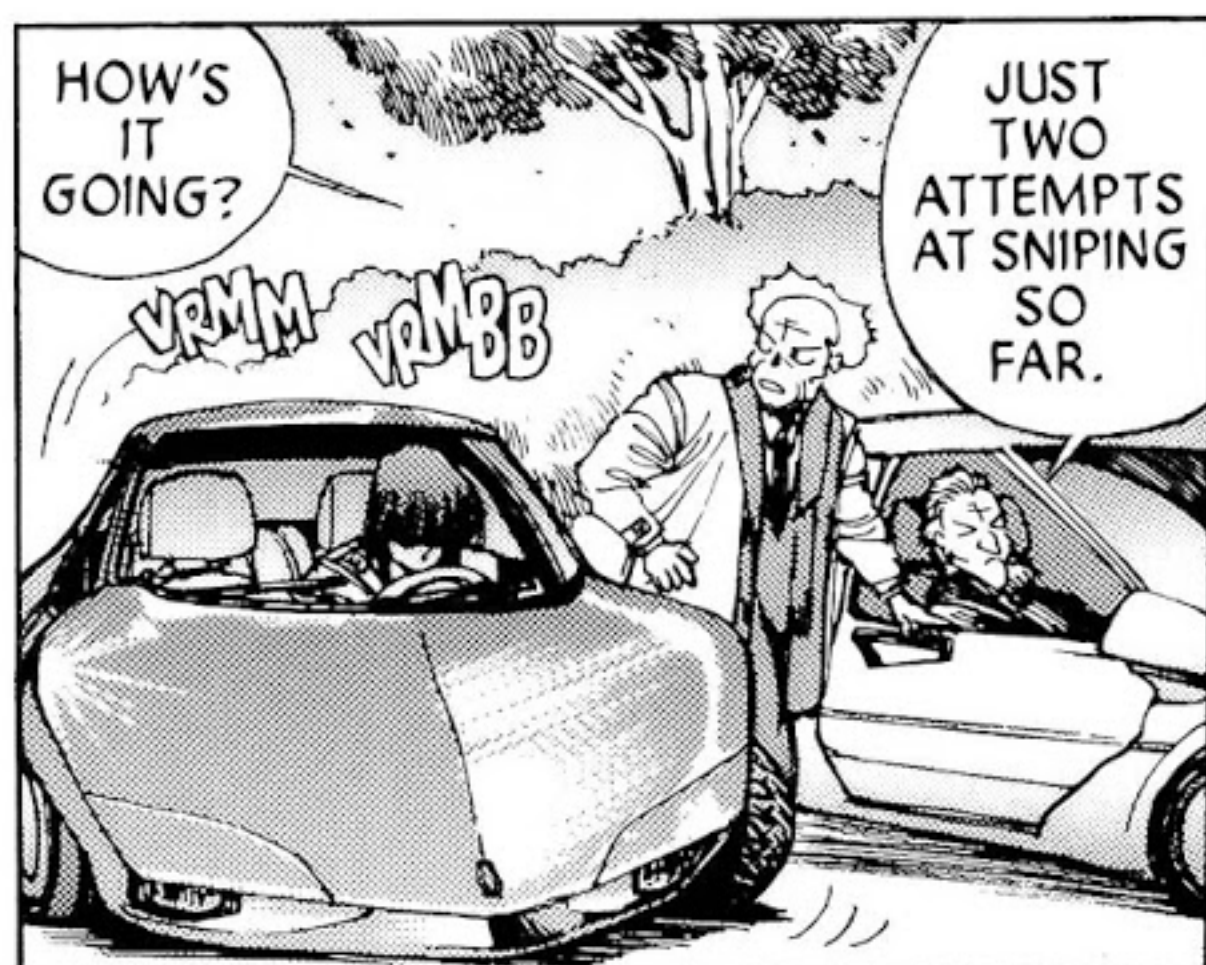
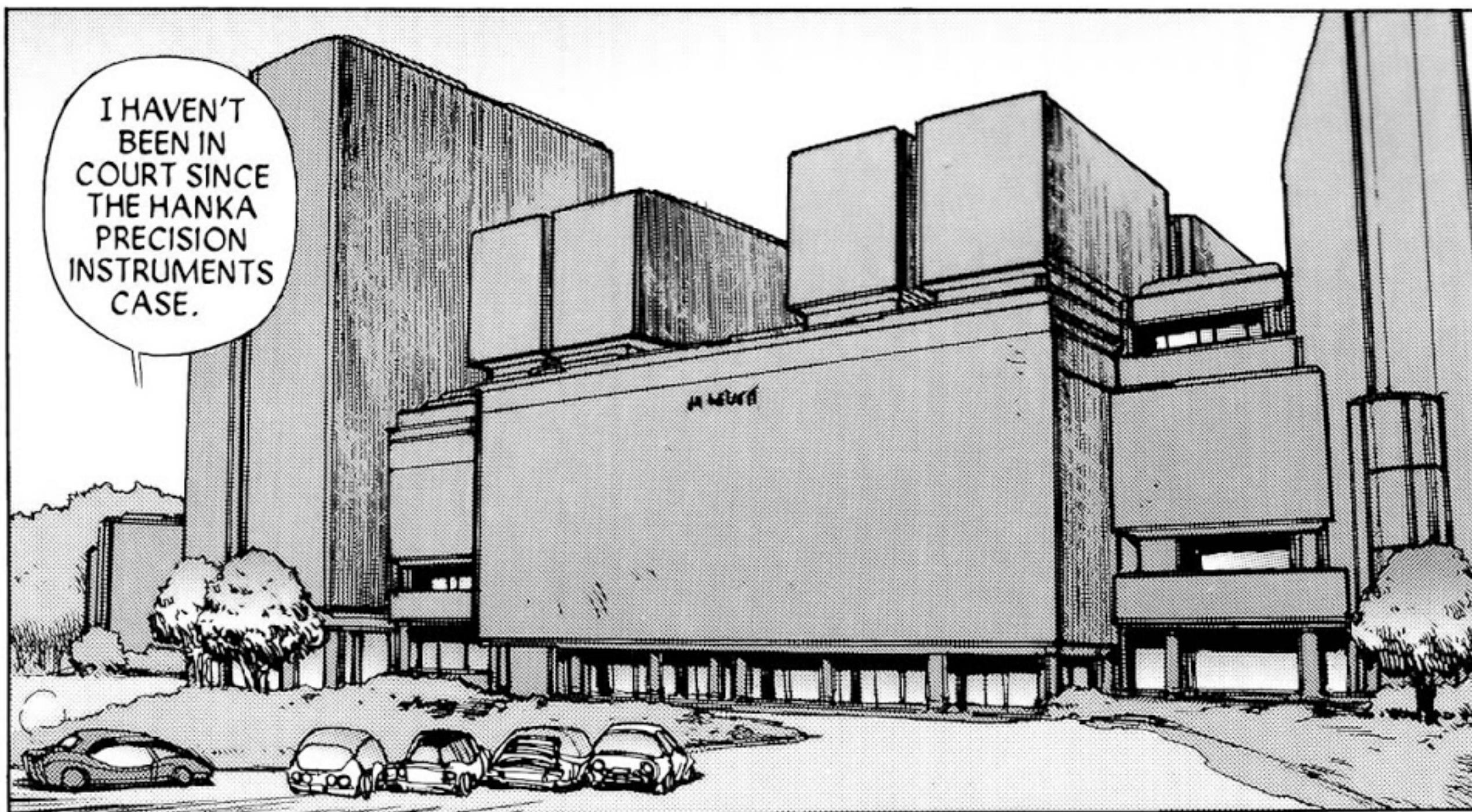








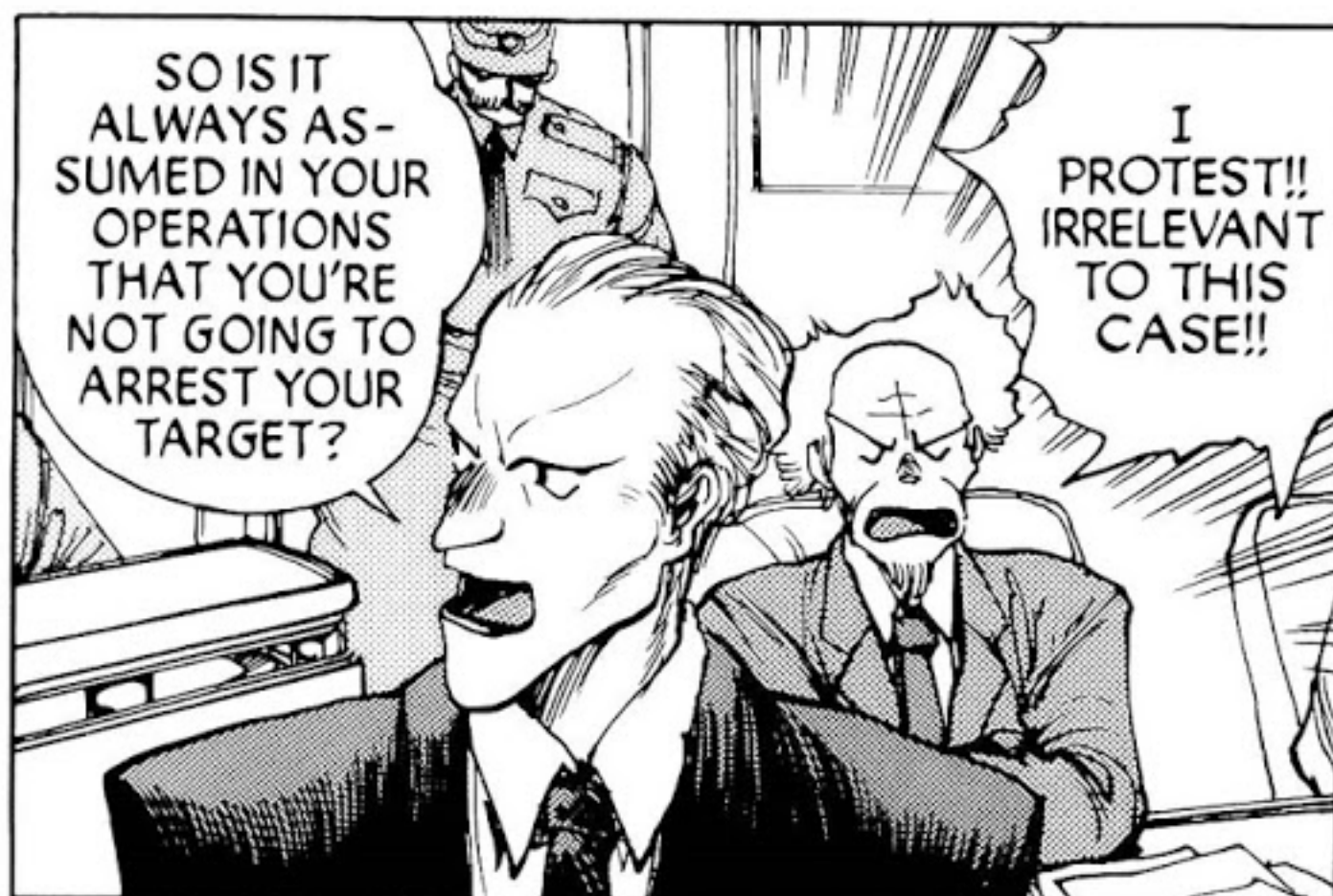
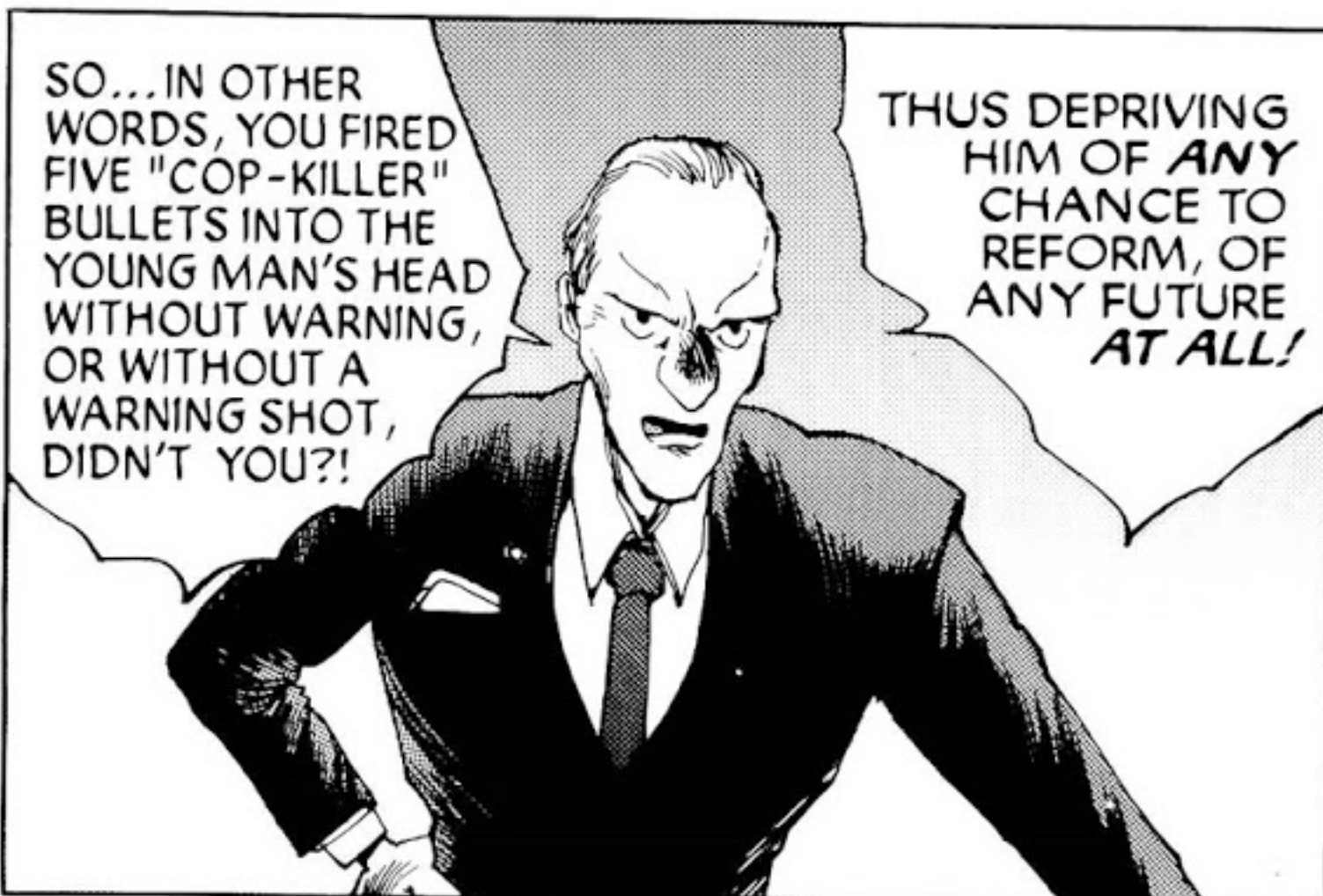




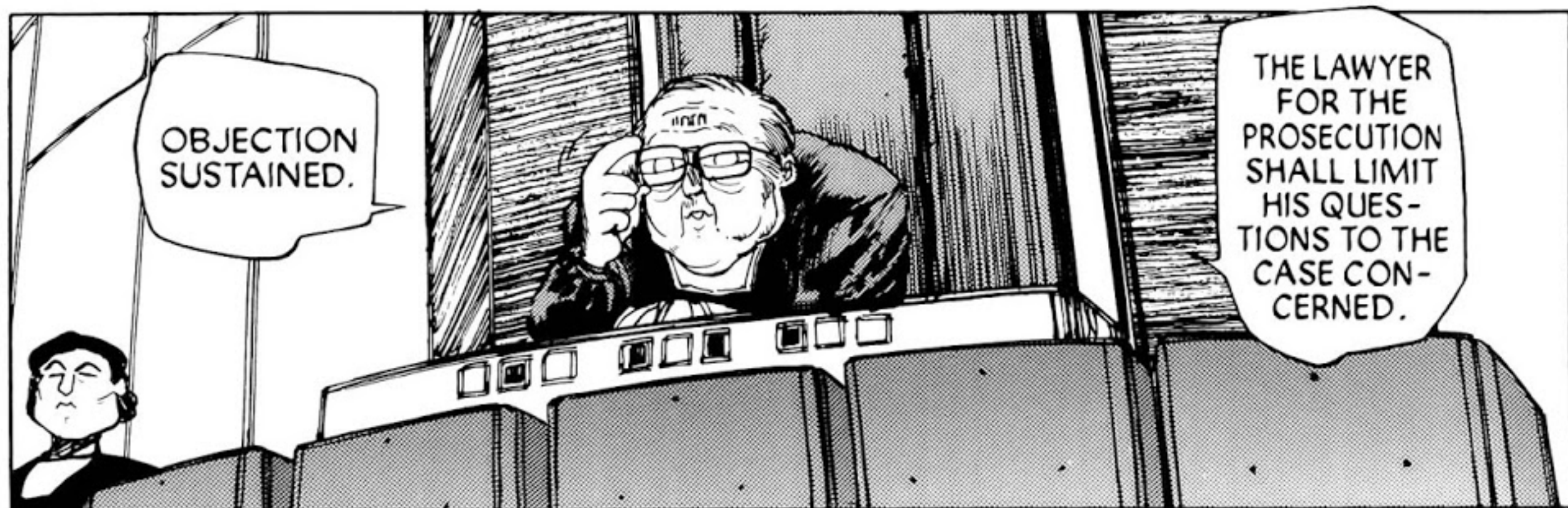












OBJECTION SUSTAINED.

THE LAWYER FOR THE PROSECUTION SHALL LIMIT HIS QUESTIONS TO THE CASE CONCERNED.

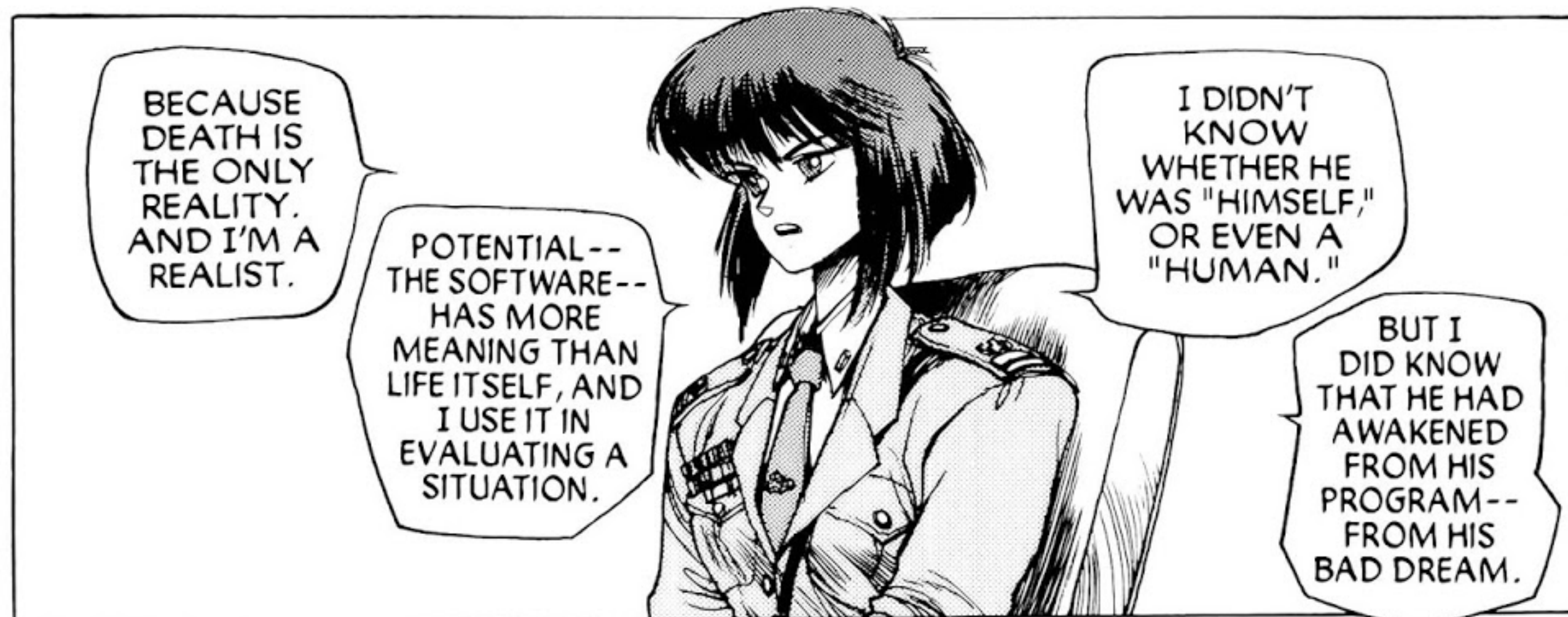
THESE LIGHTS MEAN THAT OUT OF THE NINE PRESIDING JUDGES, FIVE AGREED WITH THE OBJECTION.



GIVEN THE TESTIMONY OF MR. "B" EARLIER, AND THE VIDEO IN QUESTION THAT WAS BROADCAST, THERE IS, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, A NEARLY **ONE-SECOND** GAP BETWEEN THE TIME YOU SPOTTED THE DECEASED AND FIRED-- IS THAT NOT CORRECT?

0.82 SECONDS.

SO IN OTHER WORDS, IN THAT AMOUNT OF TIME YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SPARE HIM. BUT YOU WENT AHEAD AND **KILLED HIM!** WHY, MAJOR KUSANAGI?!

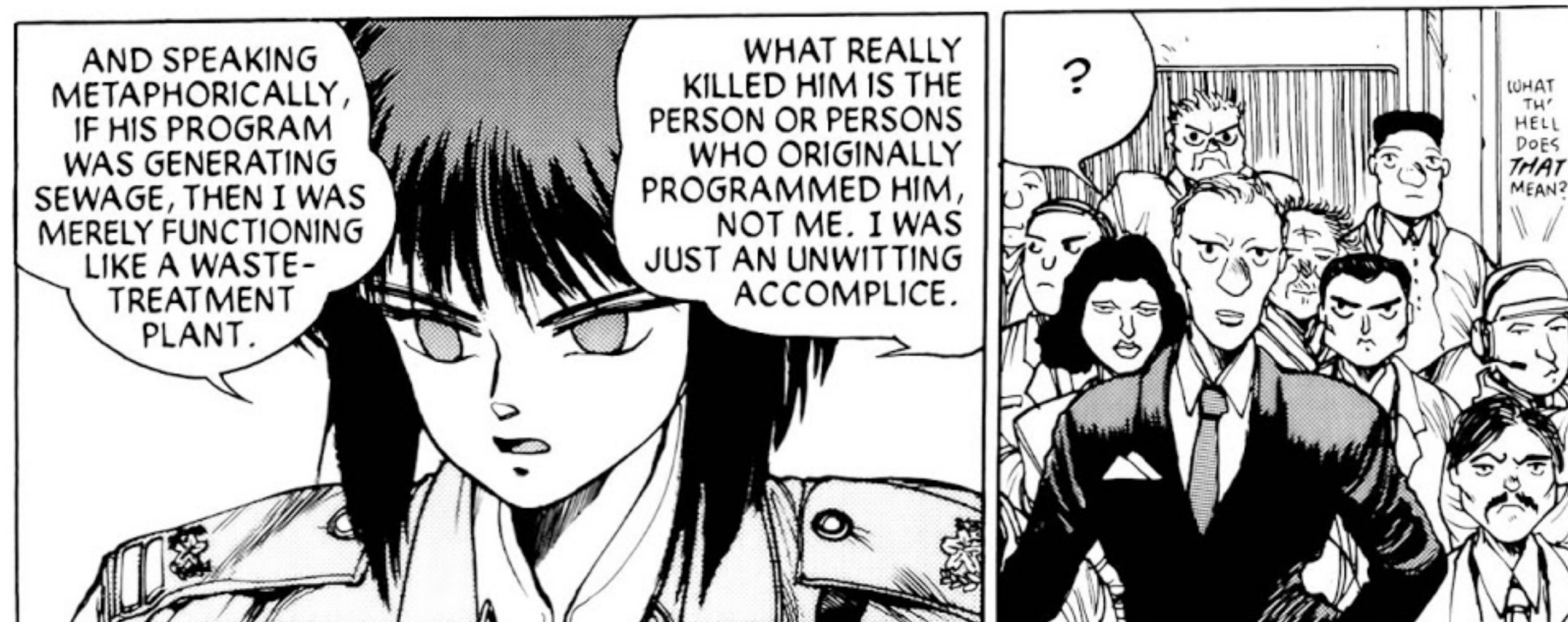


BECAUSE DEATH IS THE ONLY REALITY. AND I'M A REALIST.

POTENTIAL-- THE SOFTWARE-- HAS MORE MEANING THAN LIFE ITSELF, AND I USE IT IN EVALUATING A SITUATION.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER HE WAS "HIMSELF," OR EVEN A "HUMAN."

BUT I DID KNOW THAT HE HAD AWAKENED FROM HIS PROGRAM-- FROM HIS BAD DREAM.



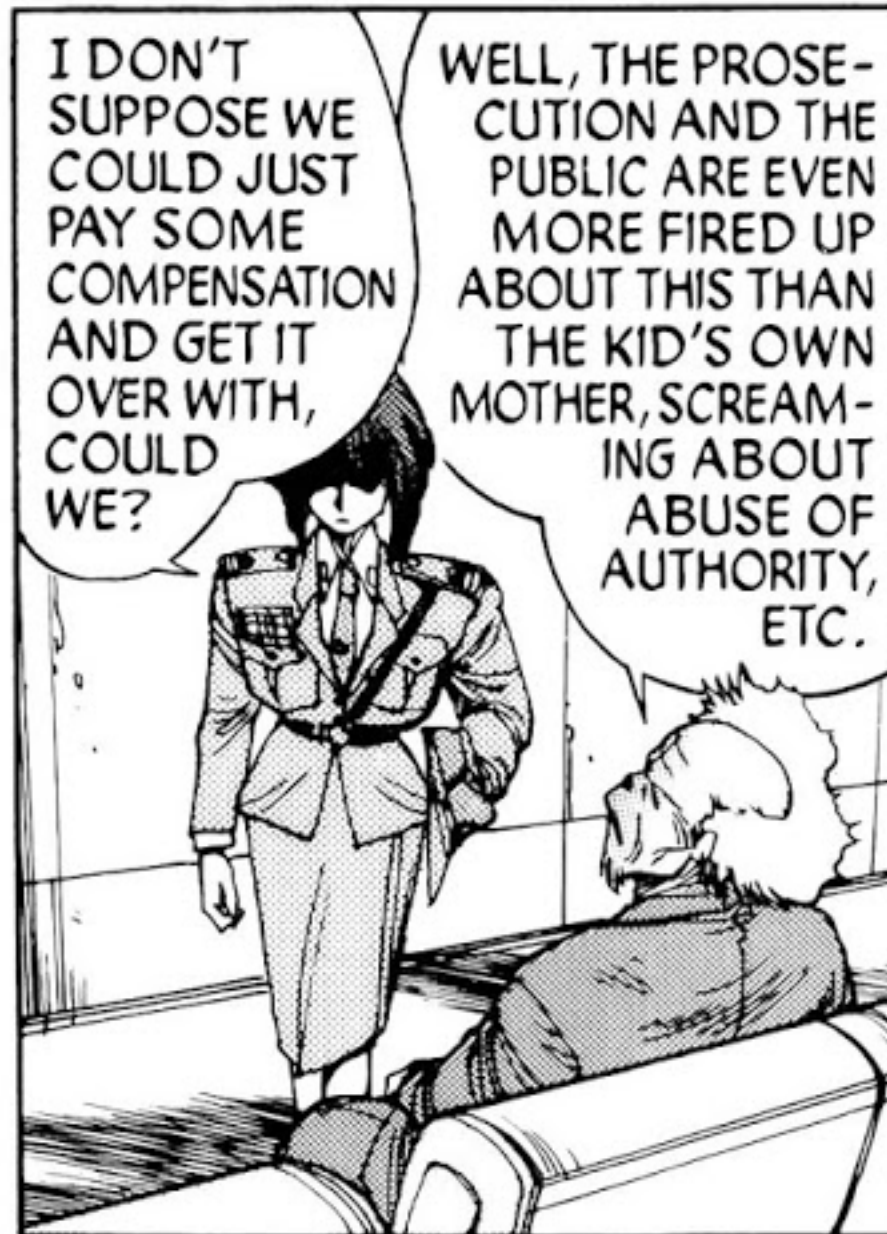
AND SPEAKING METAPHORICALLY, IF HIS PROGRAM WAS GENERATING SEWAGE, THEN I WAS MERELY FUNCTIONING LIKE A WASTE-TREATMENT PLANT.

WHAT REALLY KILLED HIM IS THE PERSON OR PERSONS WHO ORIGINALLY PROGRAMMED HIM, NOT ME. I WAS JUST AN UNWITTING ACCOMPLICE.

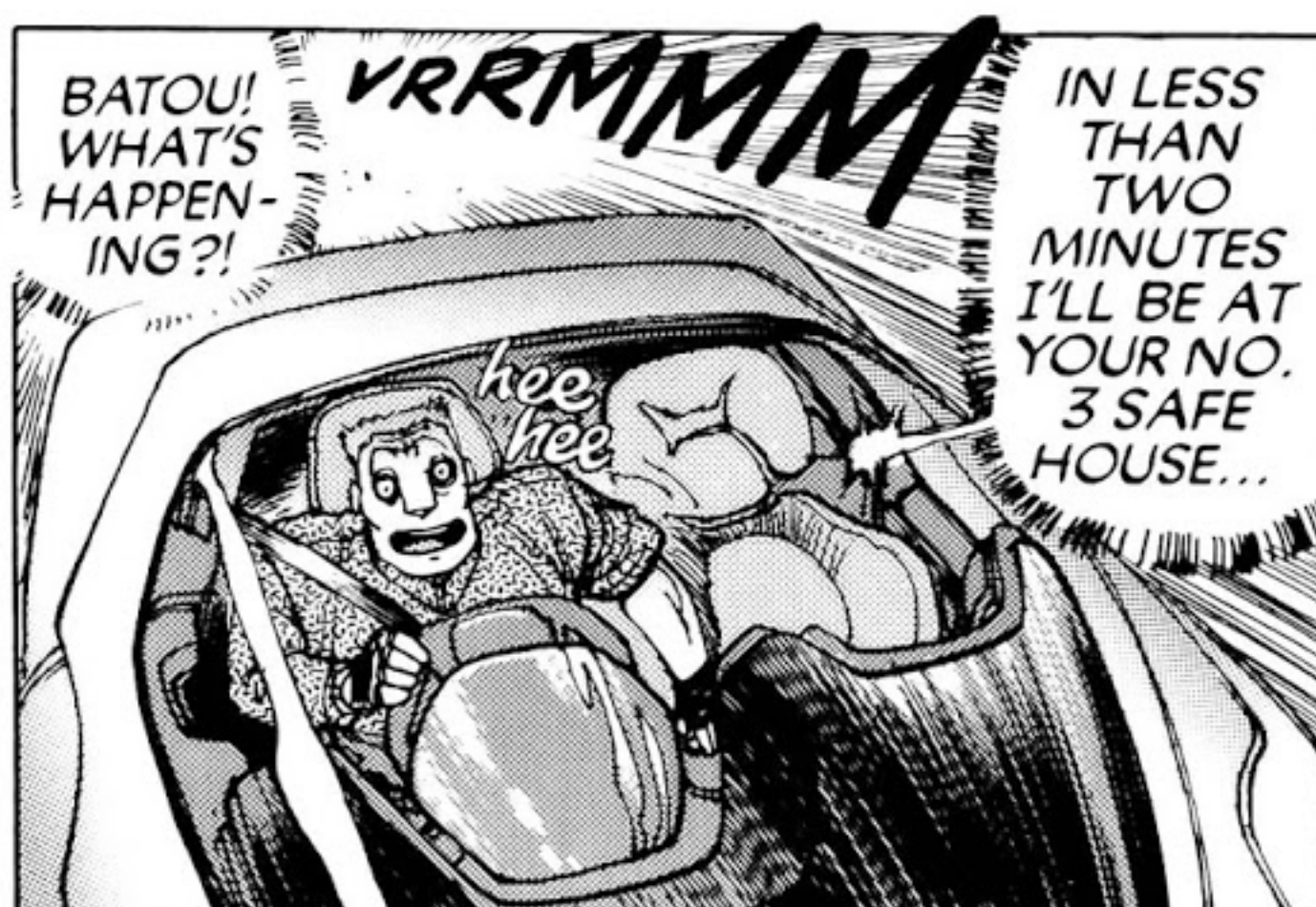
?

WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?













SO,  
ARAMAKI...

WHAT KIND  
OF PLAN *IS*  
THIS, ANY-  
WAY?

*Hrrmph!*



THE MIDEAST  
SECTION OF  
THE FOREIGN  
MINISTRY'S  
PLANNING  
TO FILE A  
PROTEST  
USING THE  
PLEA GIVEN IN  
THE DIET.

THEY'RE  
TEAMING UP WITH  
THE OPPOSITION  
PARTIES, AND  
THREATENING TO  
DESTROY THE  
CREDIBILITY OF  
THE CABINET.

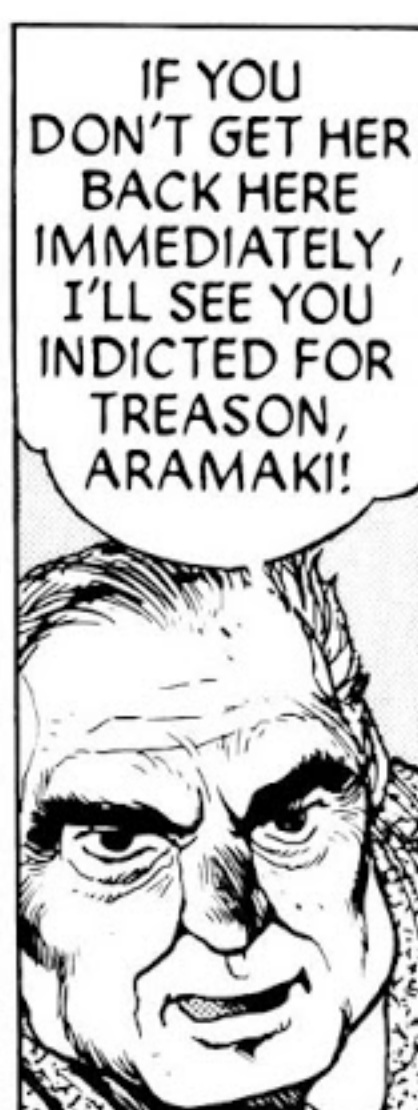
WE  
**NEED** TO  
KNOW  
WHAT  
YOUR  
STRATEGY  
IS!

ANY AGENT WHO  
RUNS FROM A COURT  
OF LAW SHOULD BE  
BROUGHT BACK IN  
BY SECTION NINE!



ACCORDING TO  
YOUR  
REPORT,  
KUSANAGI'S  
EMOTIONALLY  
UNSTABLE,  
AND CURRENTLY  
SUSPENDED  
FROM DUTY.

WHO'S  
GOING  
TO BUY  
THAT AT  
A TIME  
LIKE  
THIS?!!



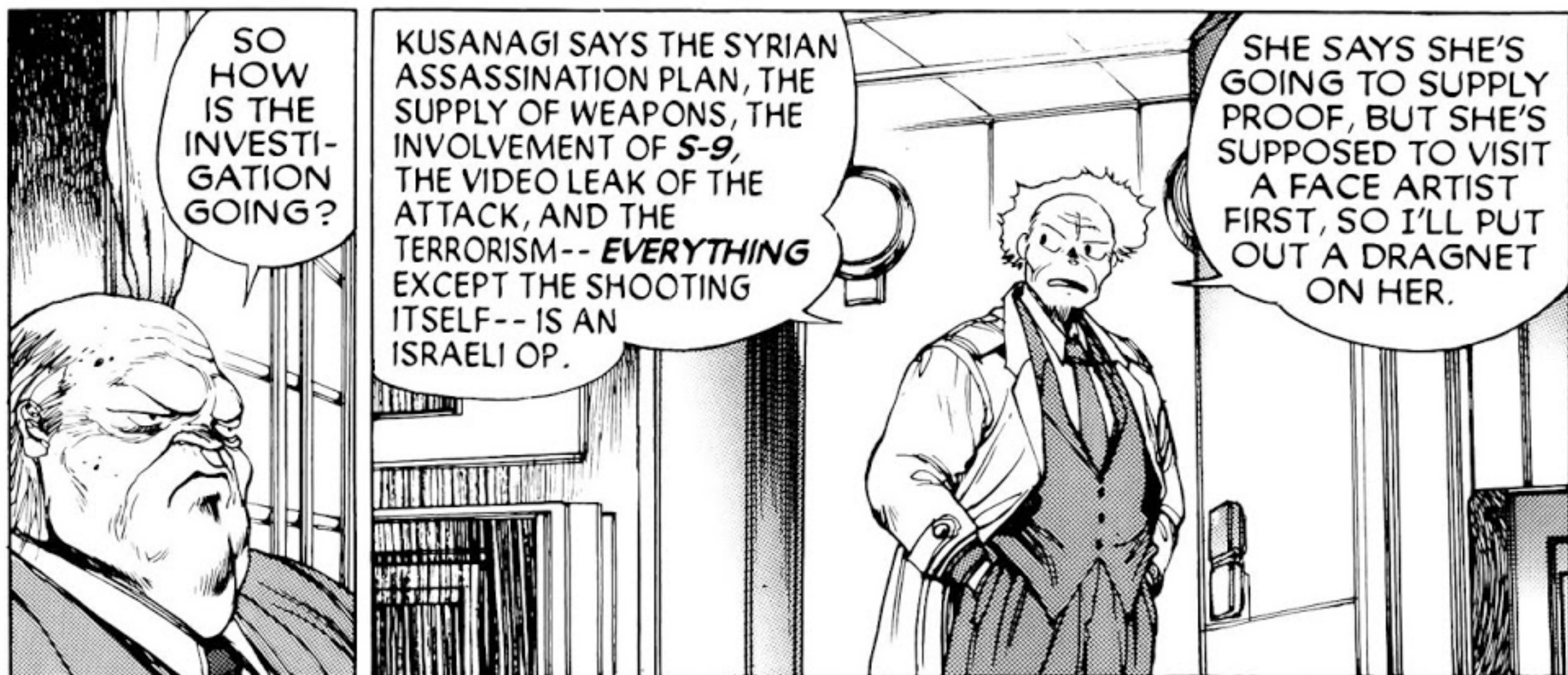
IF YOU  
DON'T GET HER  
BACK HERE  
IMMEDIATELY,  
I'LL SEE YOU  
INDICTED FOR  
TREASON,  
ARAMAKI!



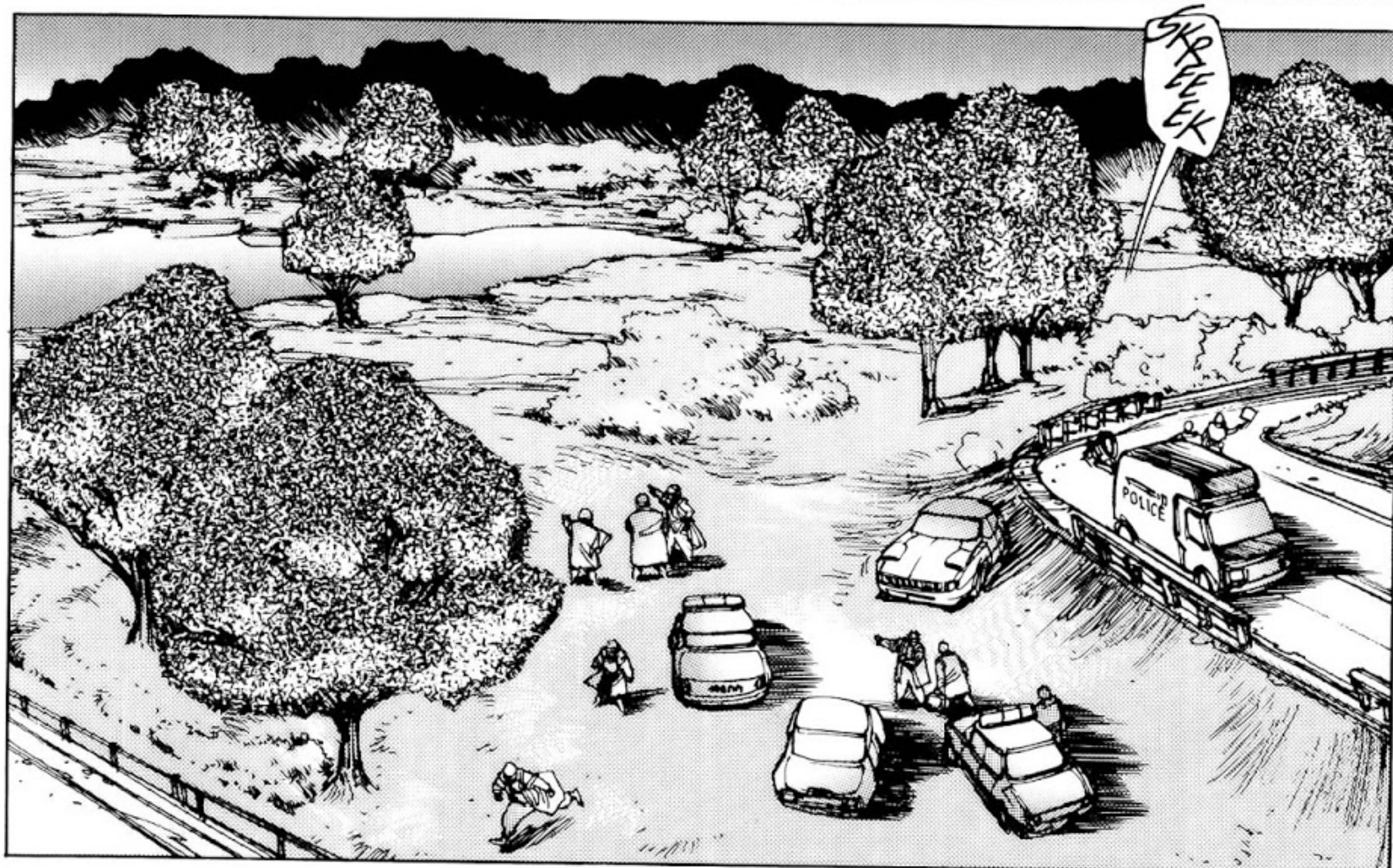
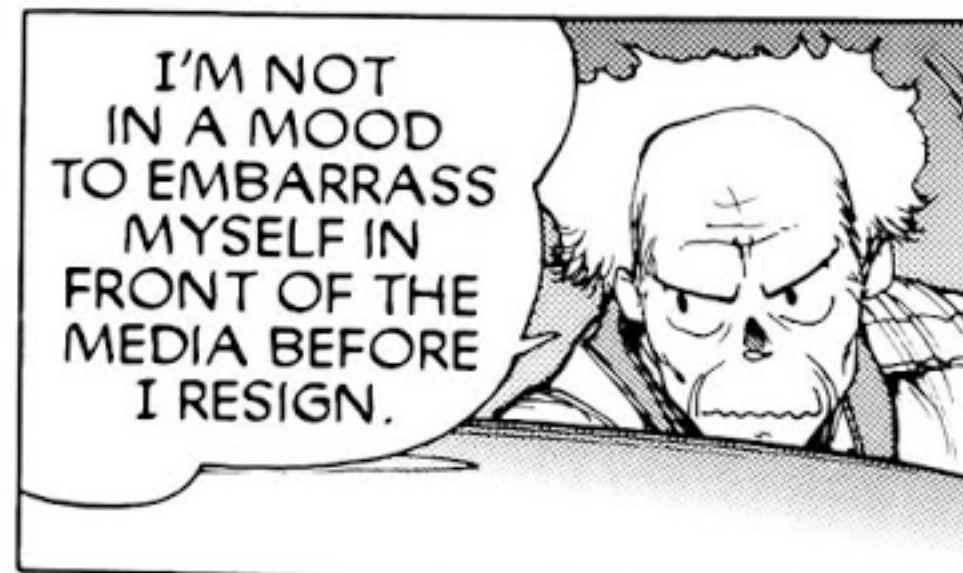
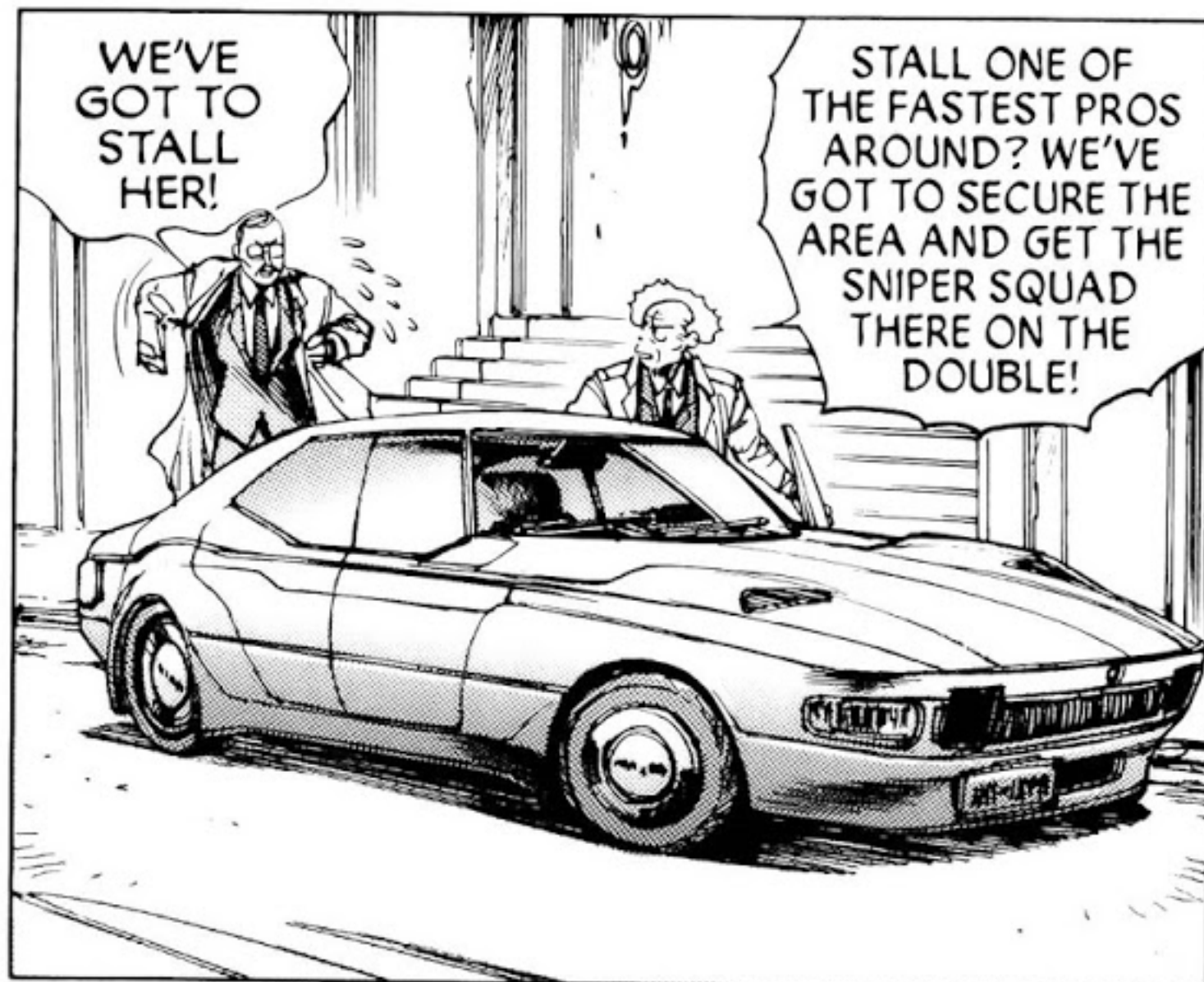
YOU  
SUMMONED  
ME HERE  
JUST TO  
TELL ME  
THAT?

EXCUSE  
ME, GENTLE-  
MEN, BUT  
I'VE GOT AN  
INVESTIGATION  
TO CONDUCT.

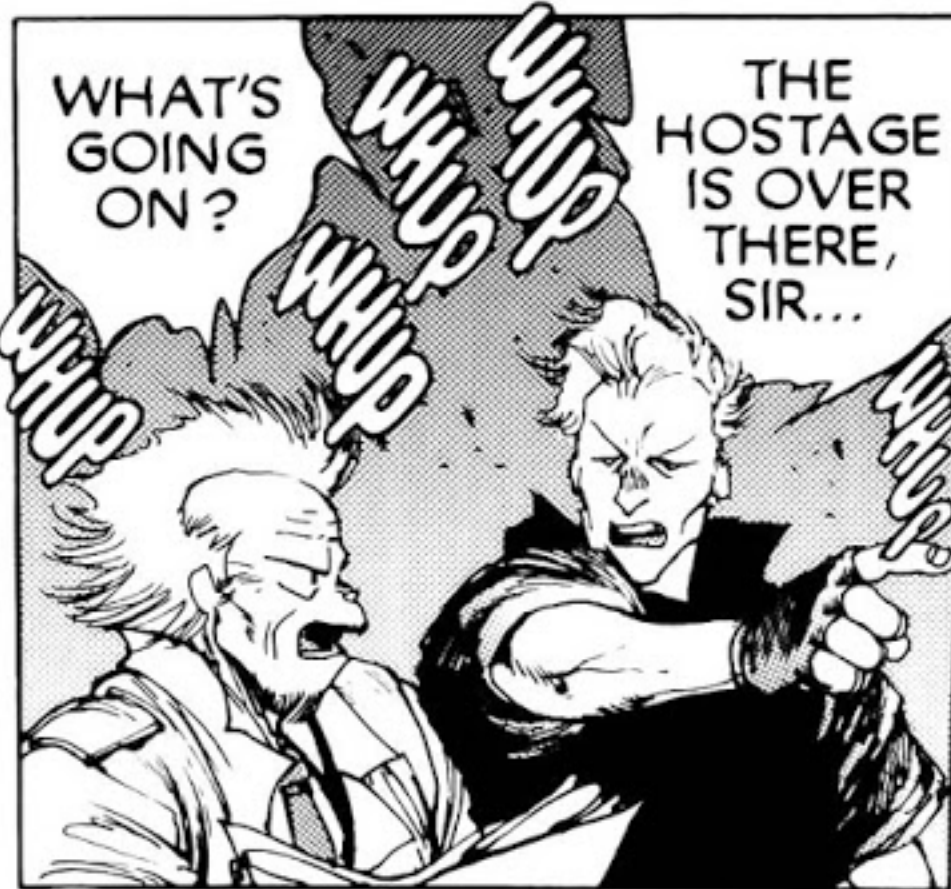
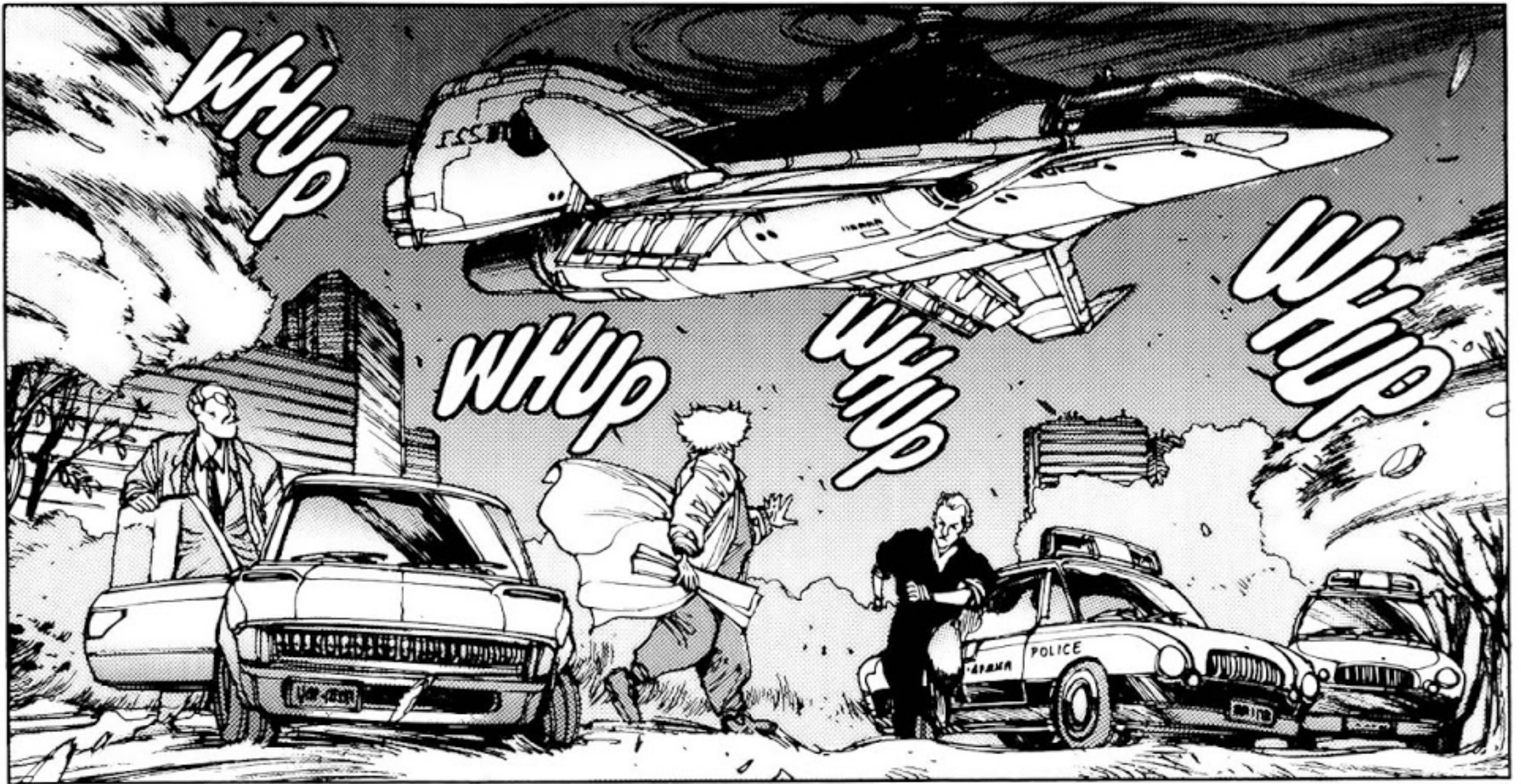






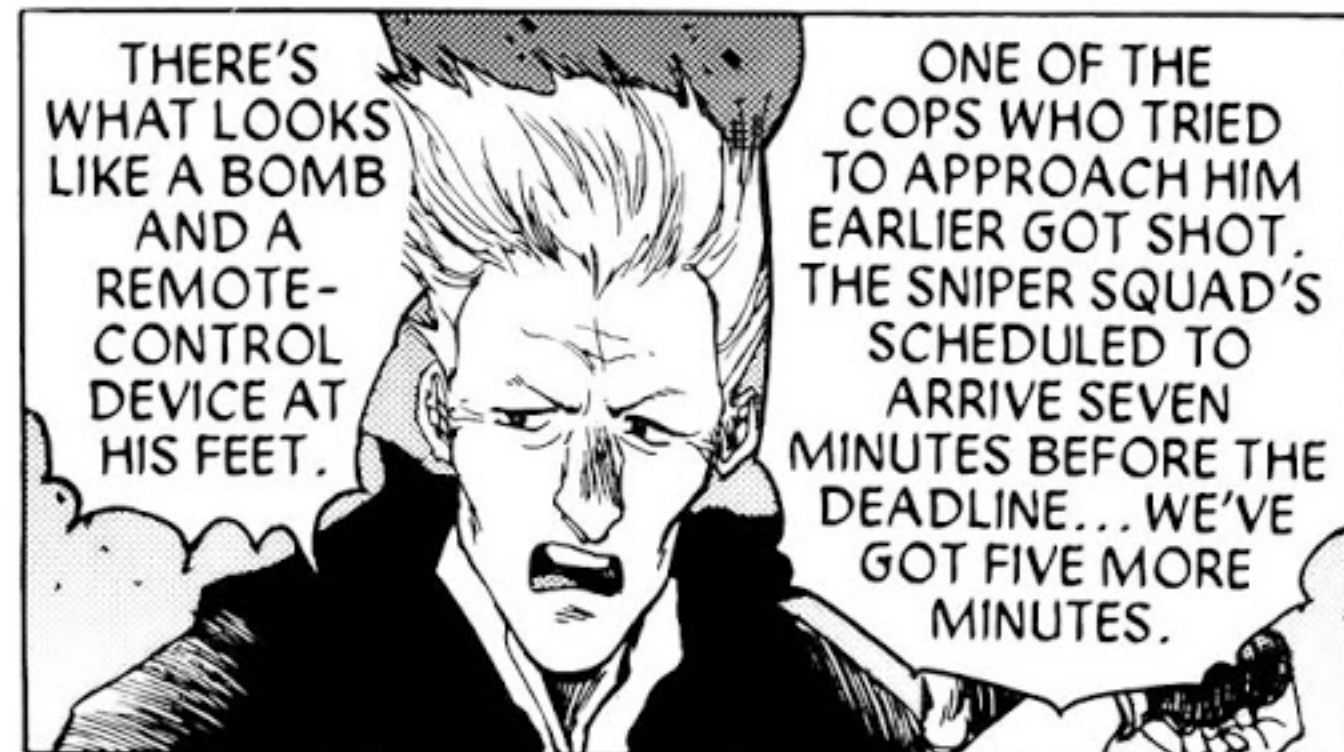






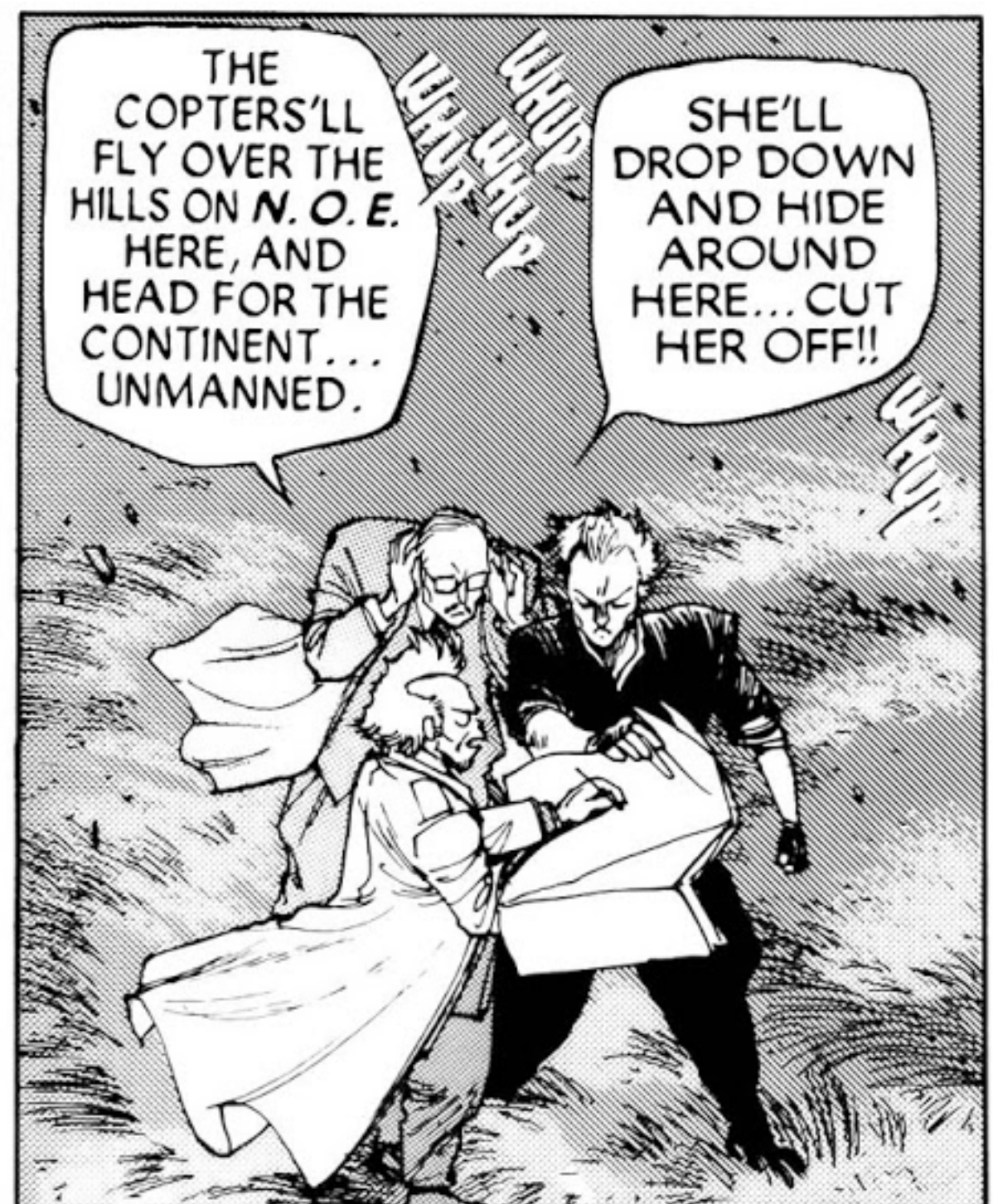
WHAT'S  
GOING  
ON?

THE  
HOSTAGE  
IS OVER  
THERE,  
SIR...



THERE'S  
WHAT LOOKS  
LIKE A BOMB  
AND A  
REMOTE-  
CONTROL  
DEVICE AT  
HIS FEET.

ONE OF THE  
COPS WHO TRIED  
TO APPROACH HIM  
EARLIER GOT SHOT.  
THE SNIPER SQUAD'S  
SCHEDULED TO  
ARRIVE SEVEN  
MINUTES BEFORE THE  
DEADLINE... WE'VE  
GOT FIVE MORE  
MINUTES.



THE  
COPTERS'LL  
FLY OVER THE  
HILLS ON N. O. E.  
HERE, AND  
HEAD FOR THE  
CONTINENT...  
UNMANNED.

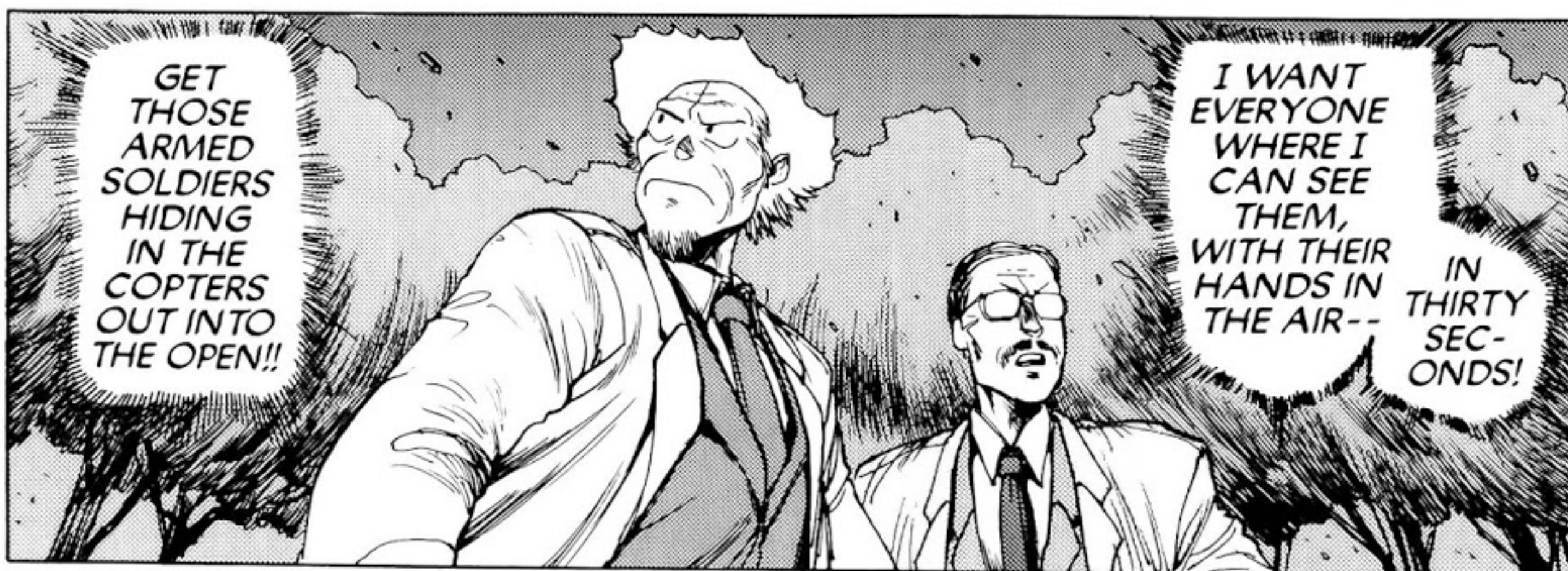
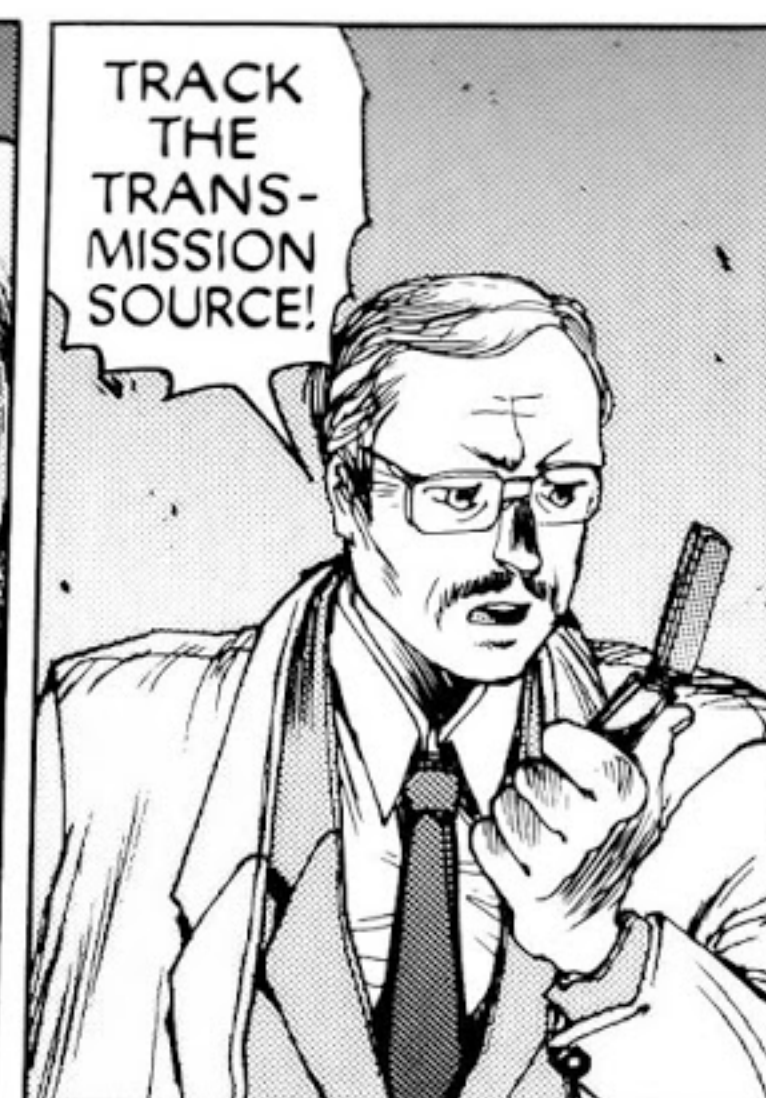
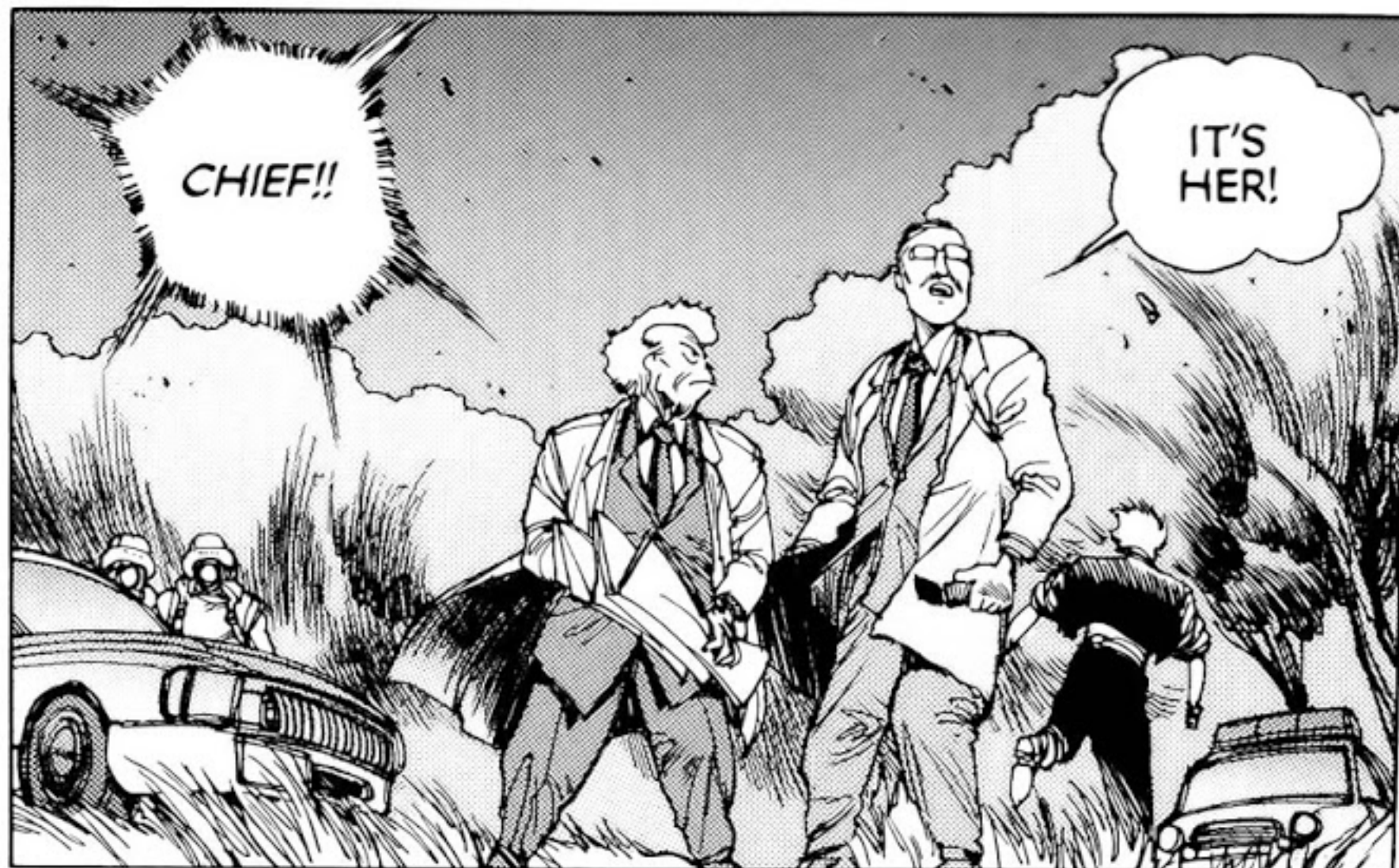
SHE'LL  
DROP DOWN  
AND HIDE  
AROUND  
HERE... CUT  
HER OFF!!



THAT ONLY  
GIVES US  
ONLY TWO  
MINUTES  
LEEWAY!

THAT  
MEANS OUR  
MOVEMENTS  
ARE TAKING  
TWO MINUTES  
MORE THAN  
SHE PLANNED.





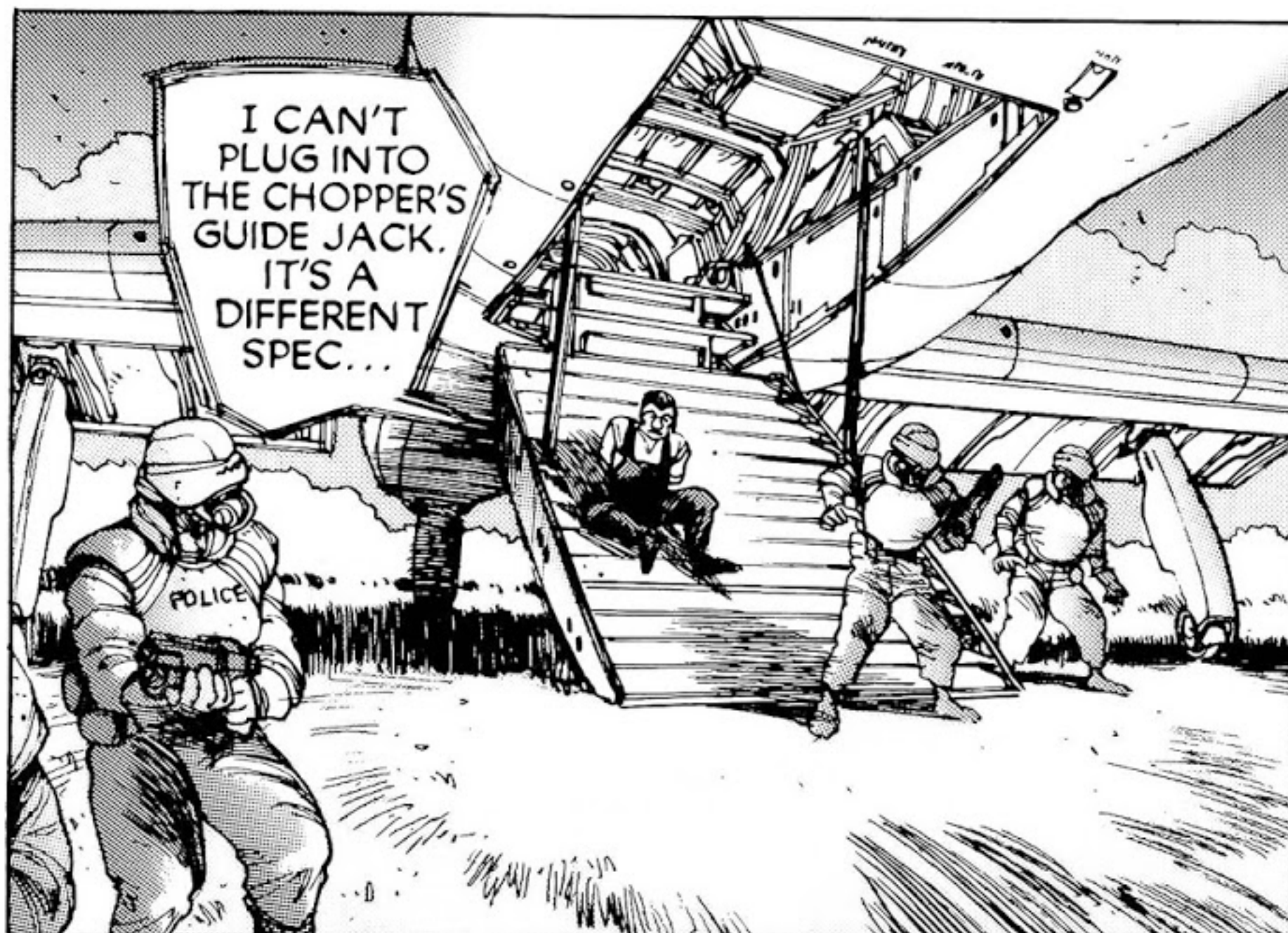




















THE DEAL'S OFF.  
CHANNEL 533  
IS SYNCHING  
WITH US NOW  
FOR LIVE  
BROADCAST.  
WE GO ON THE  
AIR IN FIVE  
SECONDS.



DAMN  
IT!!

GIVE  
HER THE  
CONNEC-  
TION  
ADAPT-  
ER!



GOOD  
NEWS  
FOR ME,  
I HOPE,  
ARA-  
MAKI...

YESSIR, MR.  
PRIME MINISTER.  
WE'VE IDENTIFIED  
AN ISRAELI MOLE  
WHO INFILTRATED  
CLOSE TO THE  
CORE.



YES, BUT  
WE STILL  
HAVE TO  
CLEAN UP  
AFTER ONE  
FAILURE.

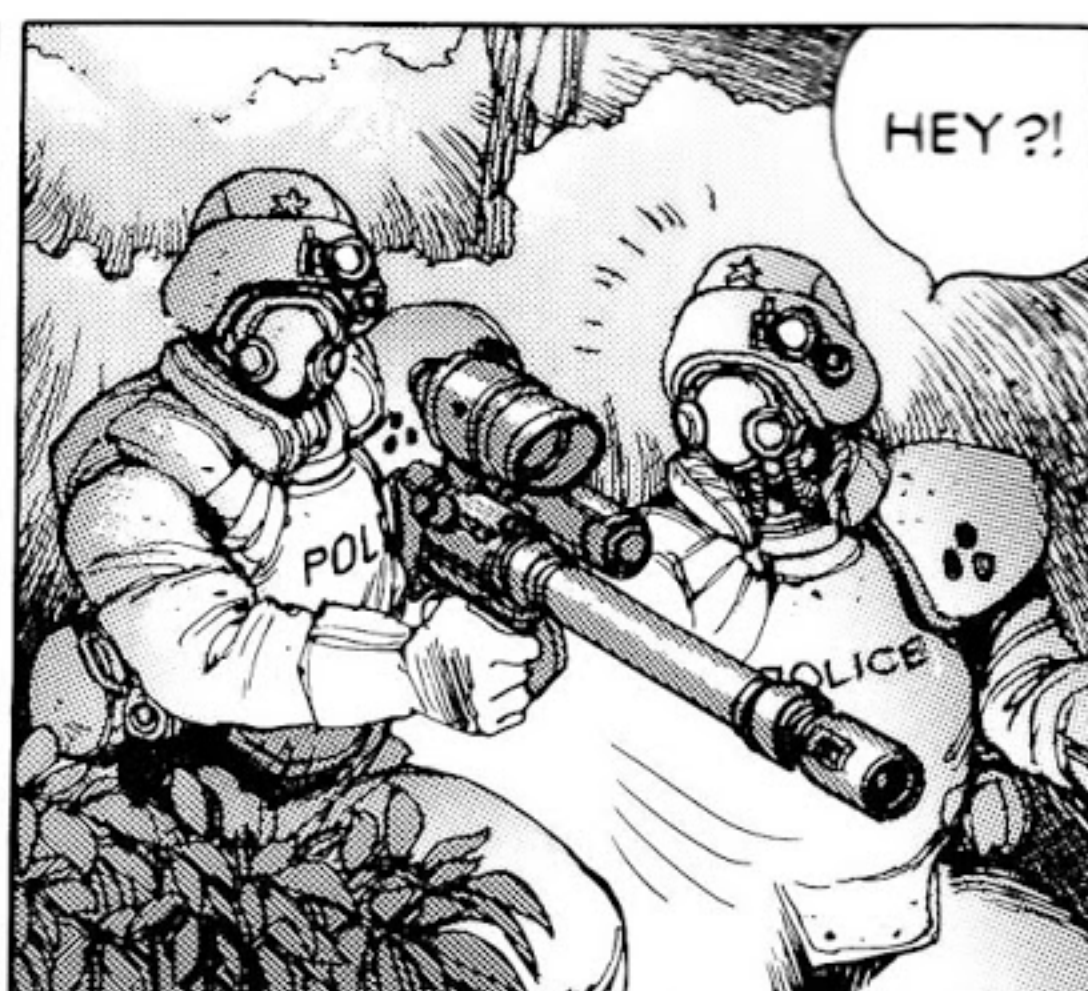
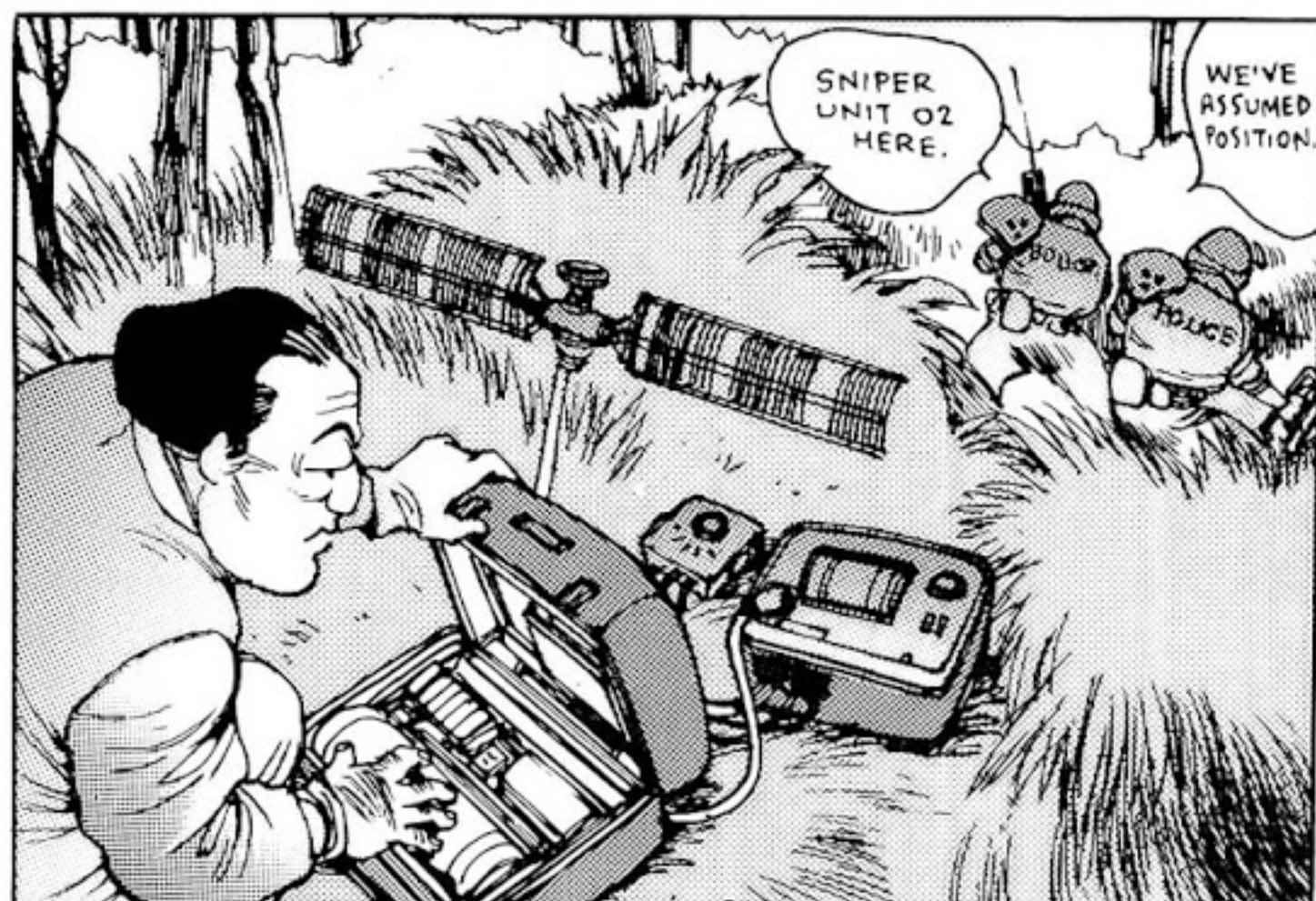


CONGRATU-  
LATIONS ON A  
JOB WELL  
DONE.

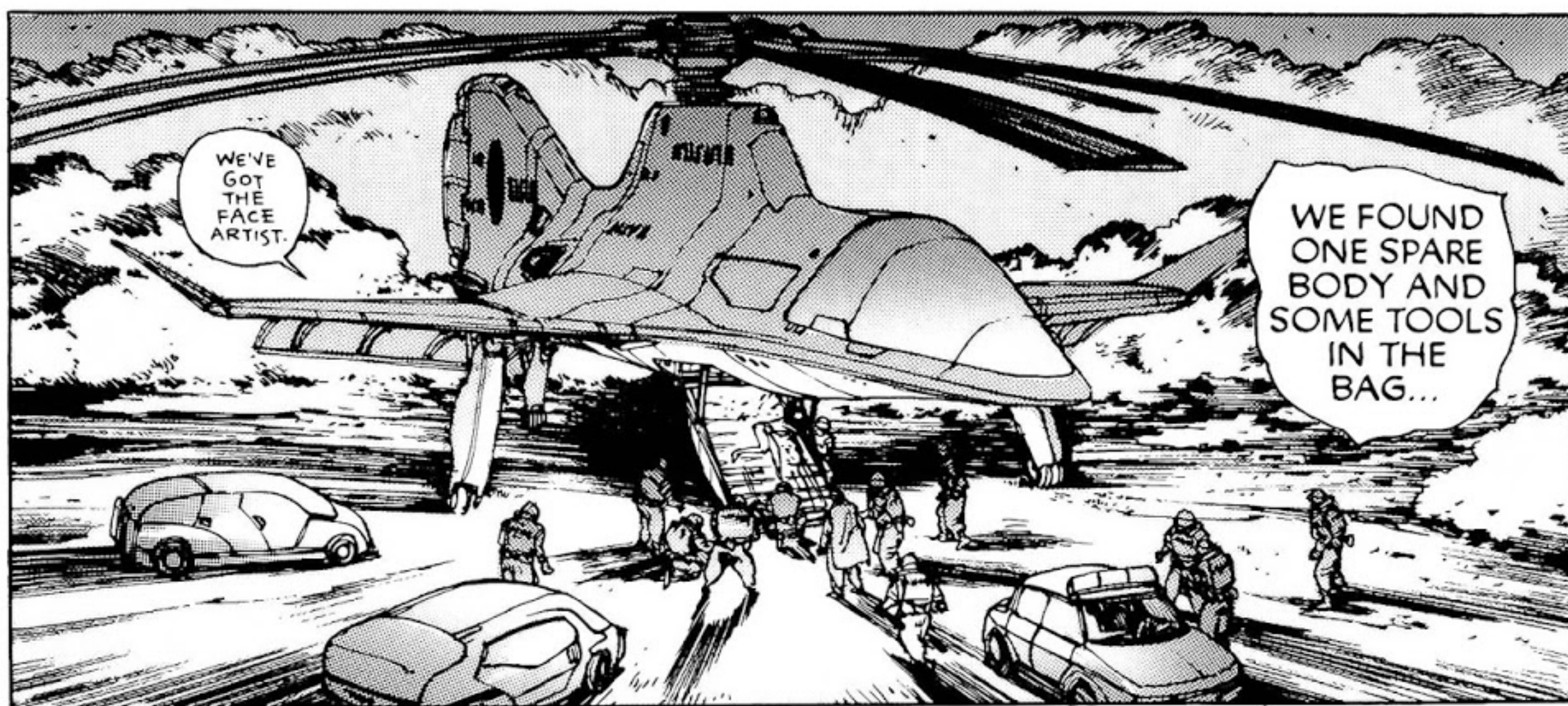
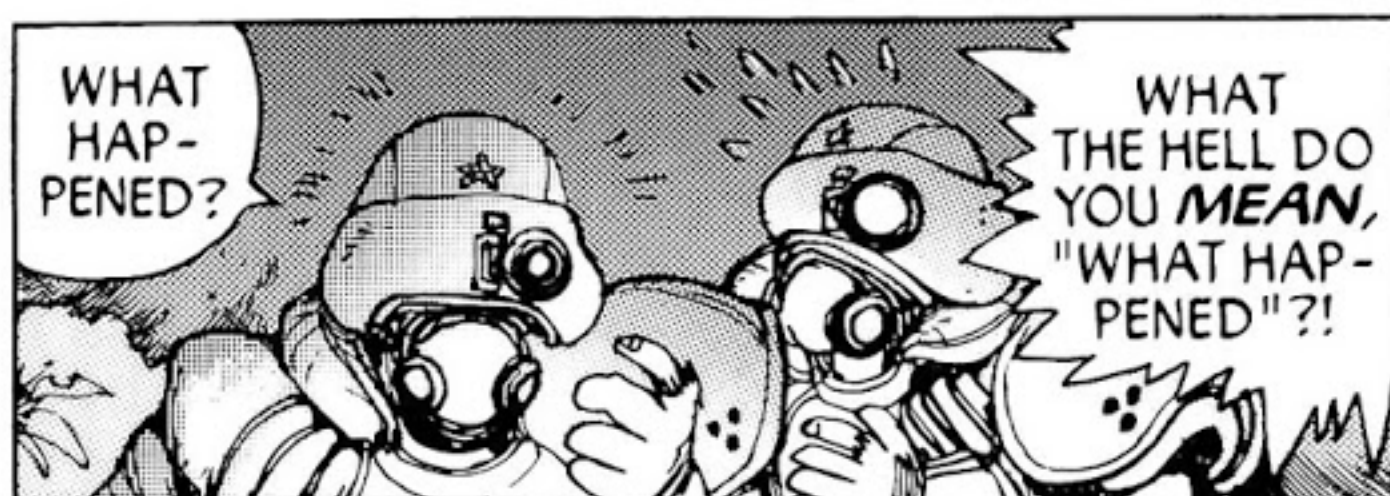
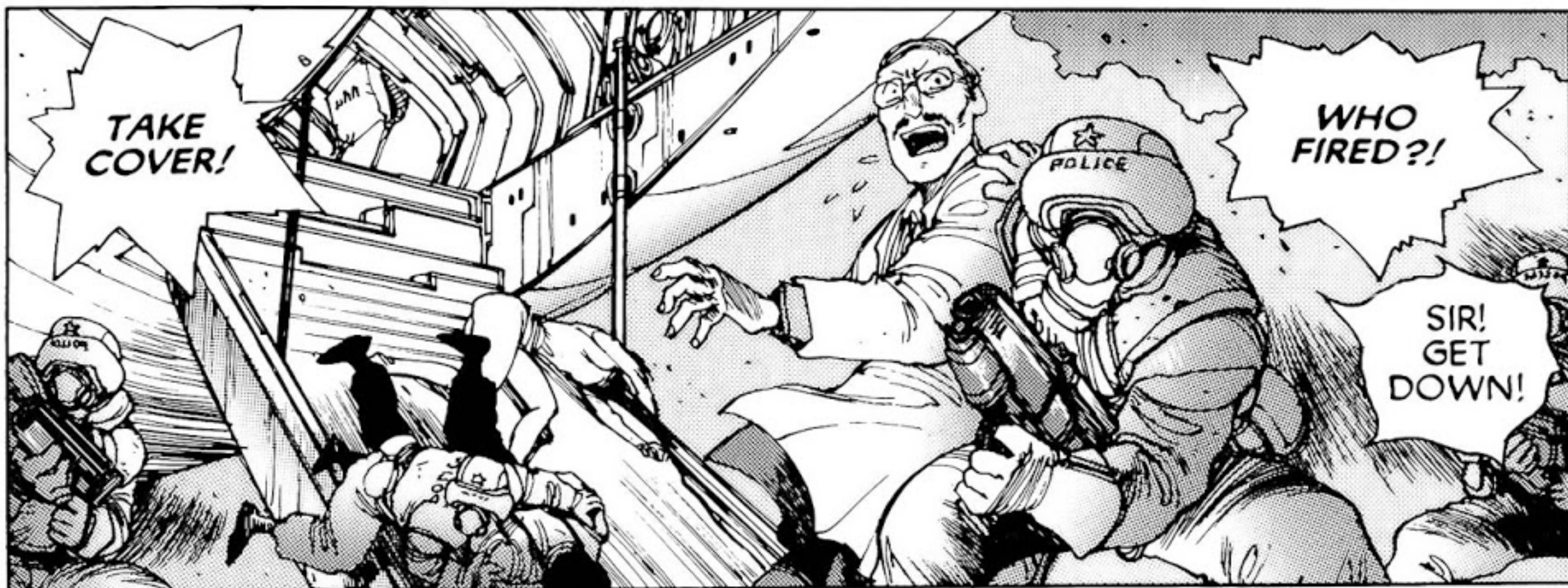


WE'VE  
NOTHING  
TO  
LOSE...

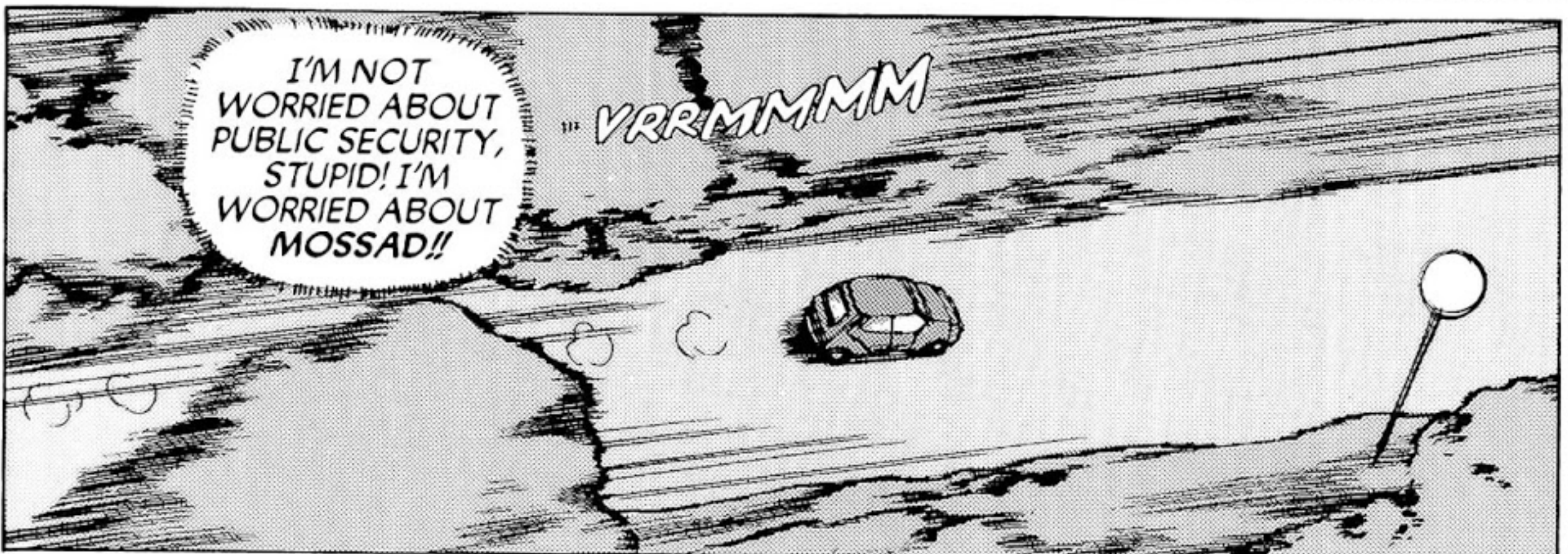
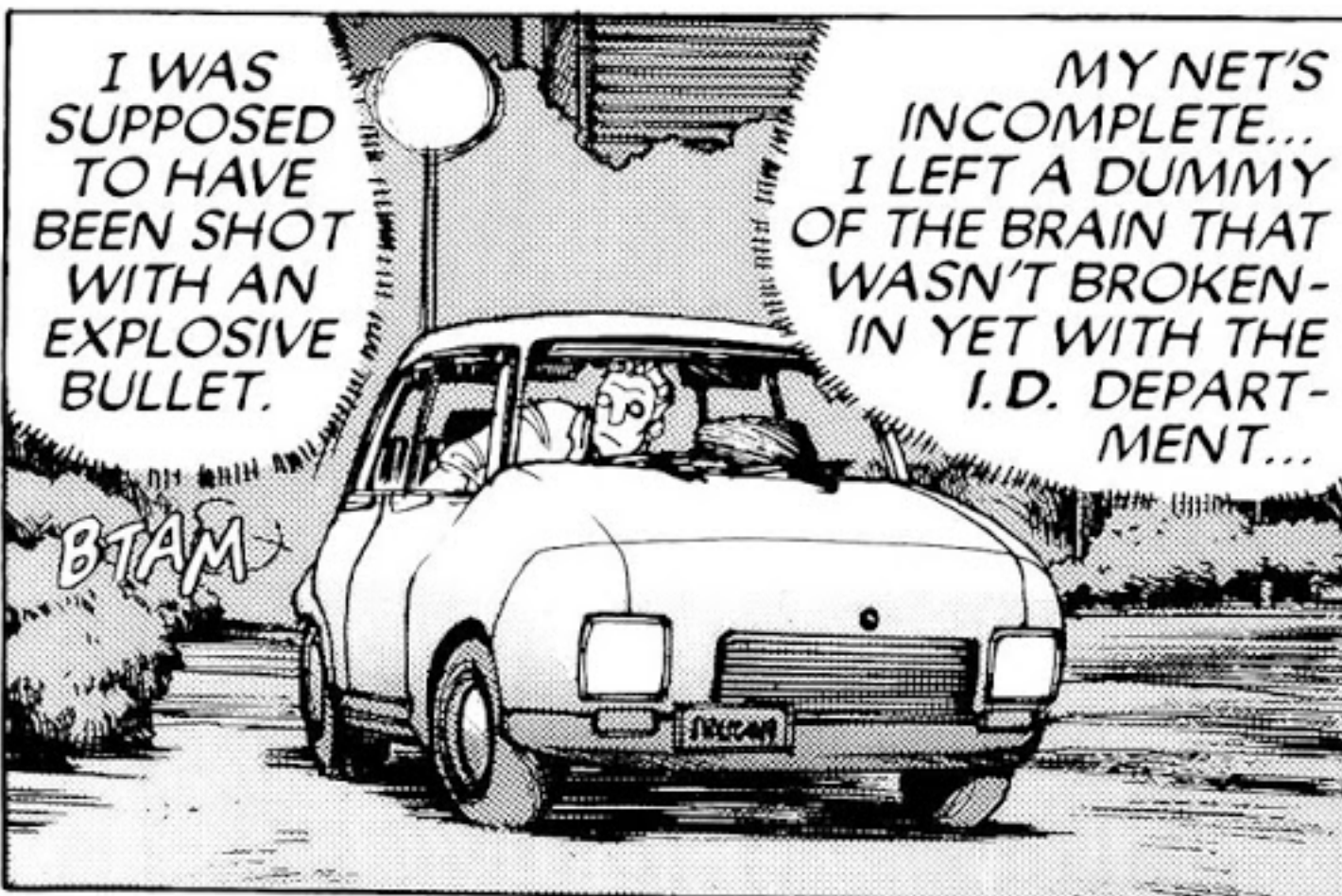
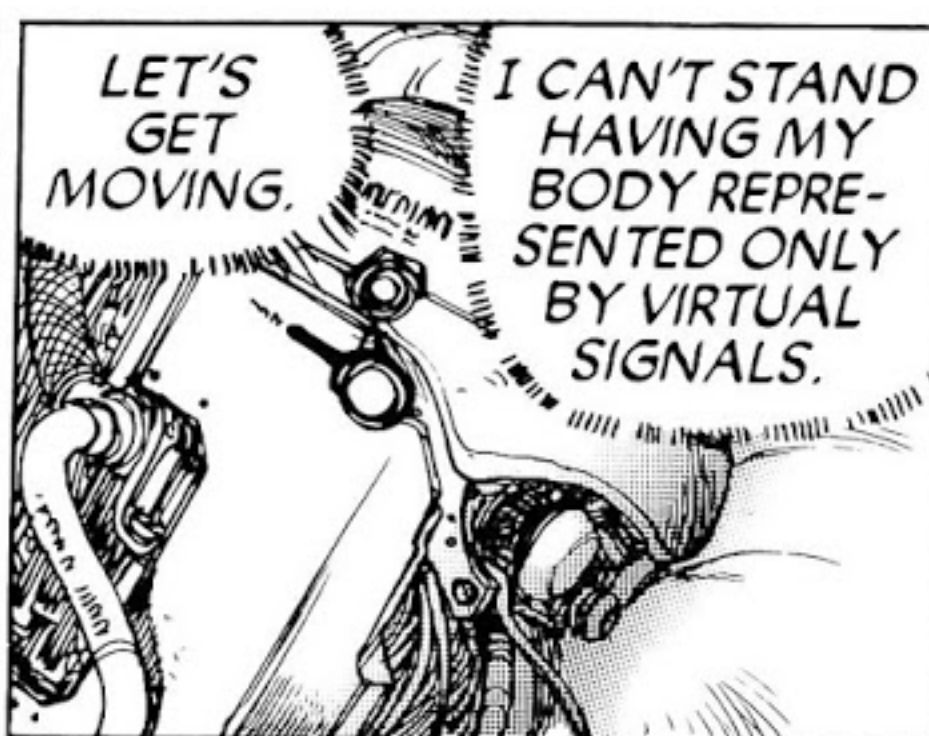
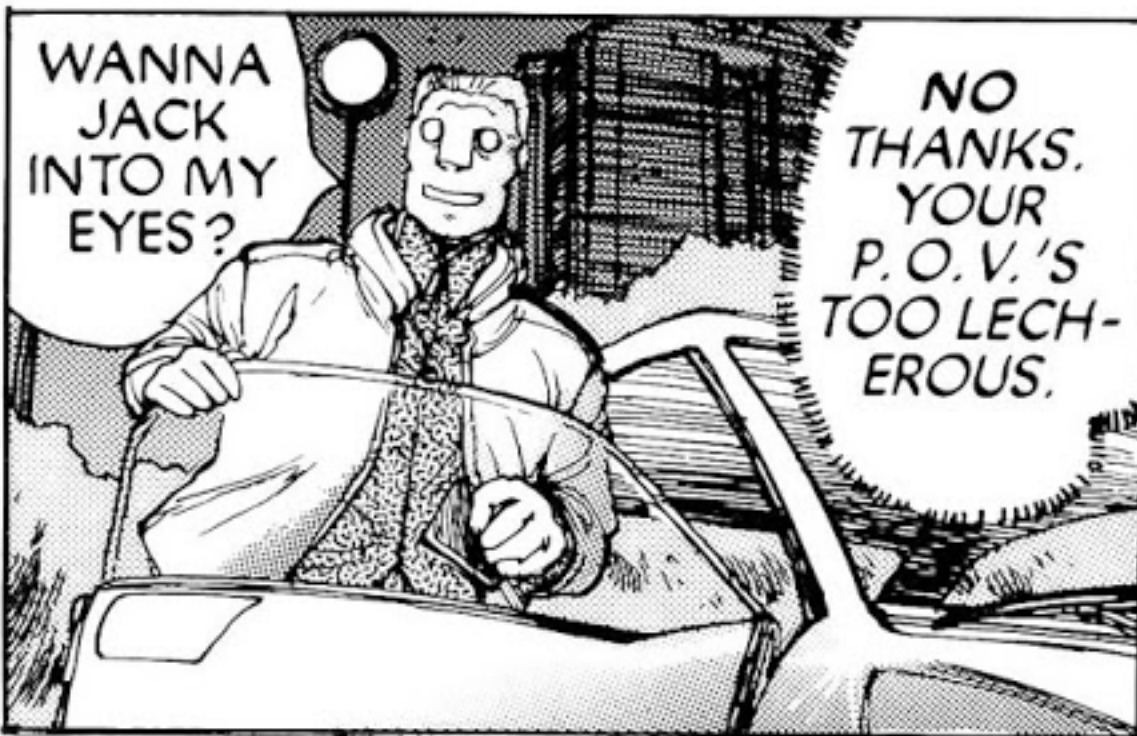
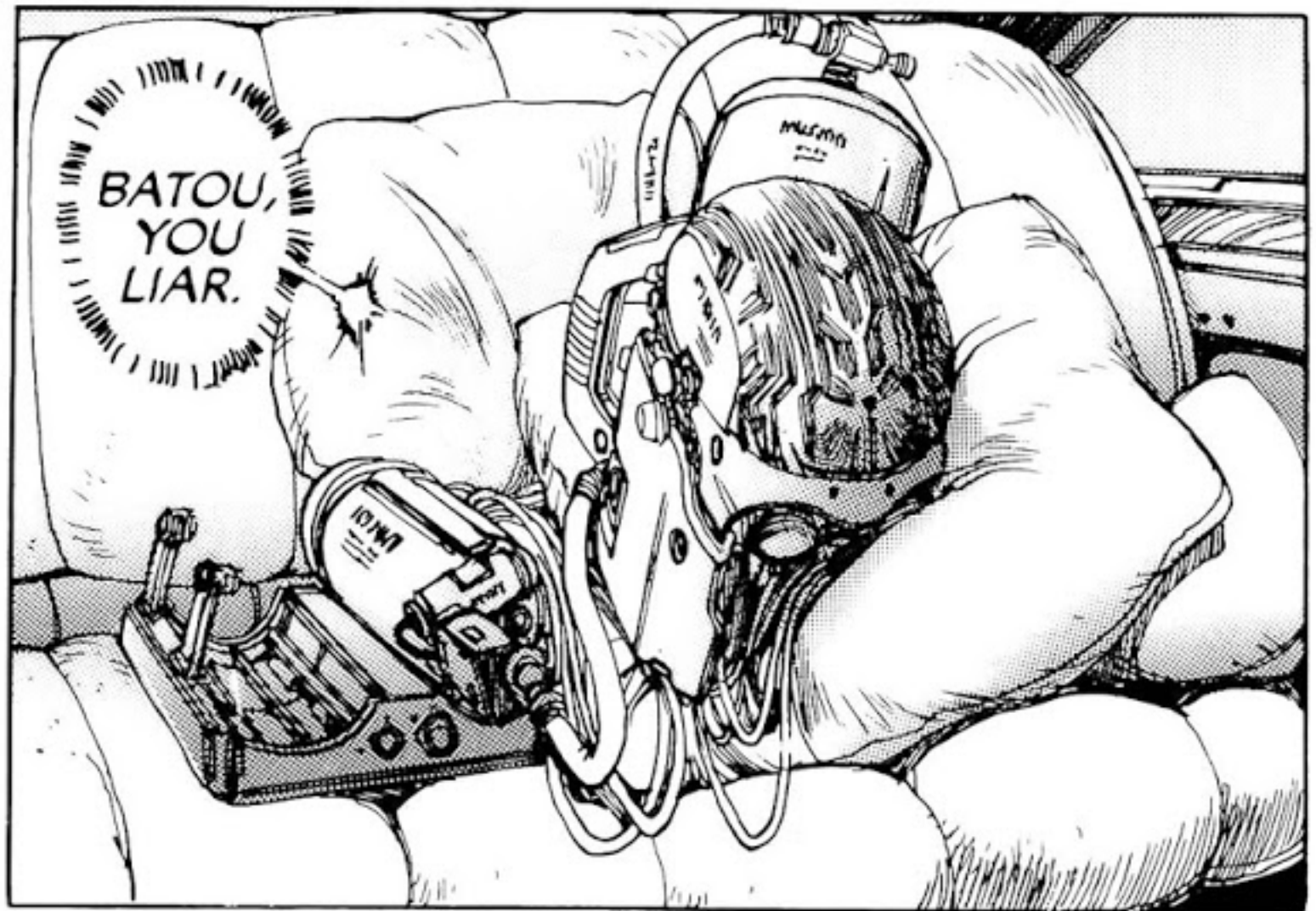










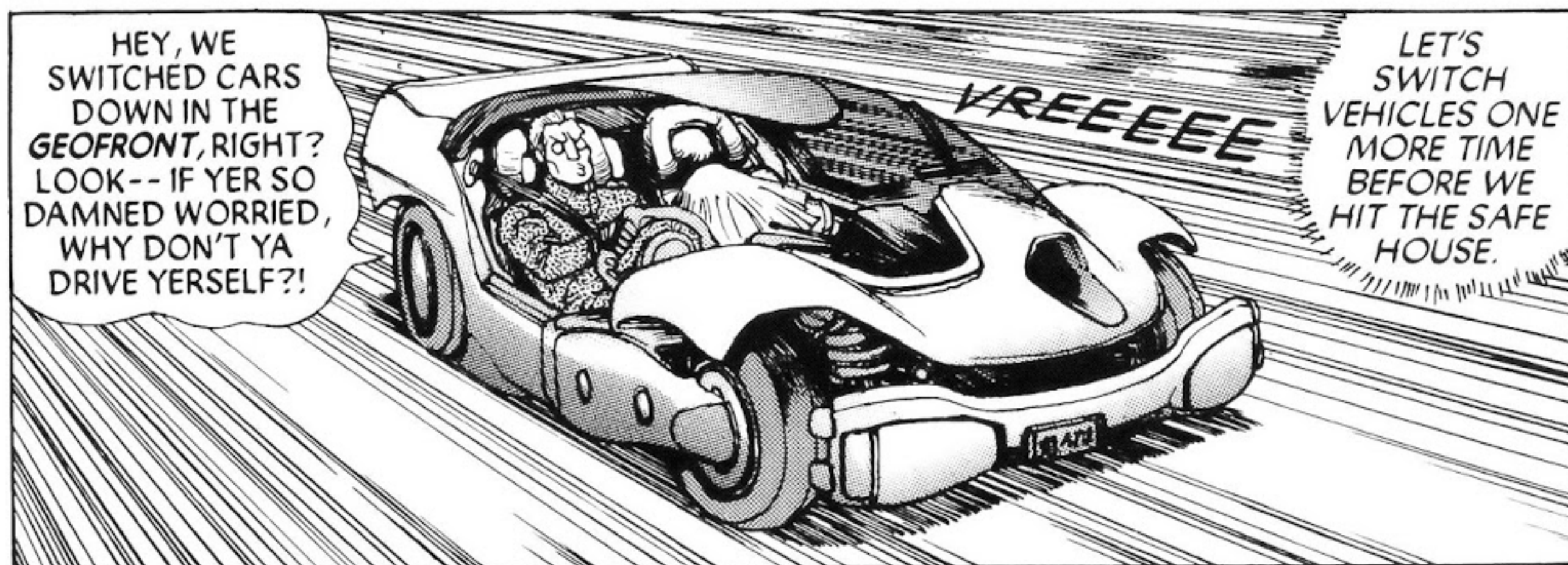
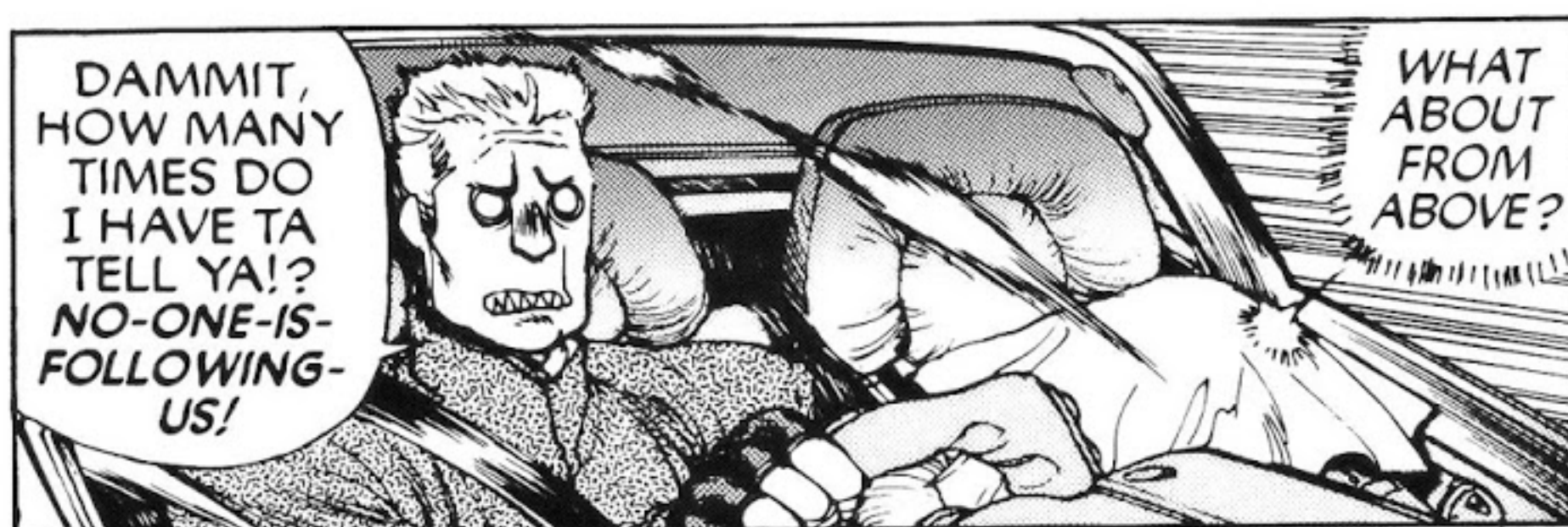




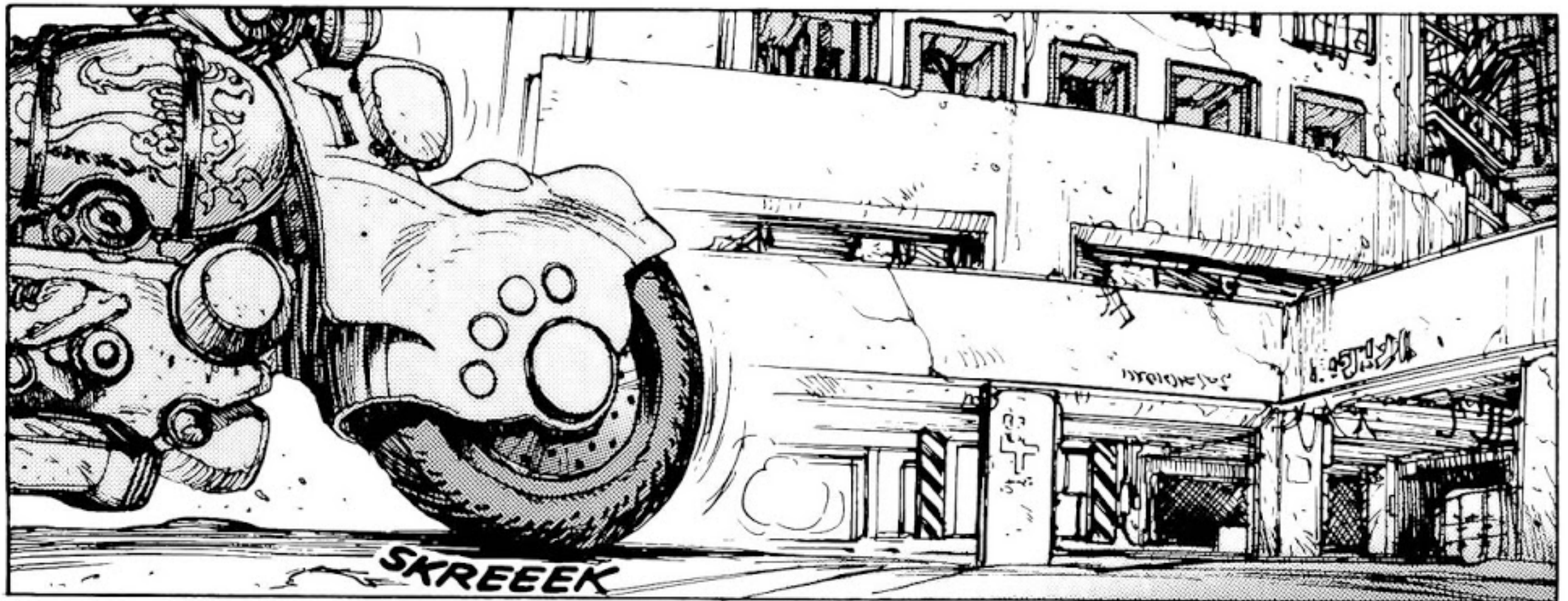


# 11

G H O S T  
C O A S T  
1 8 . 9 . 2 0 3 0



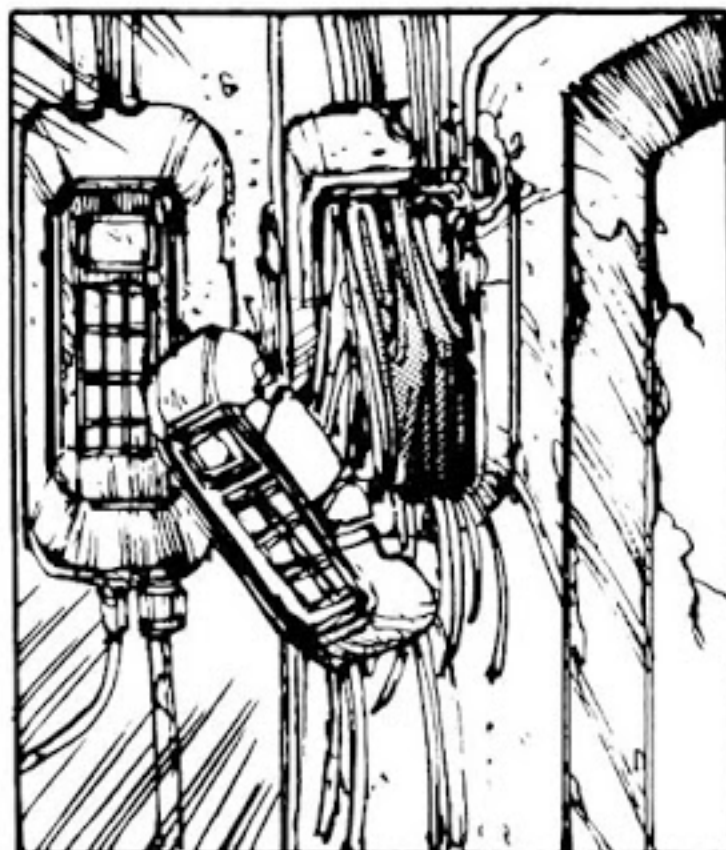




THIS, TOO, IS A STOLEN VEHICLE.

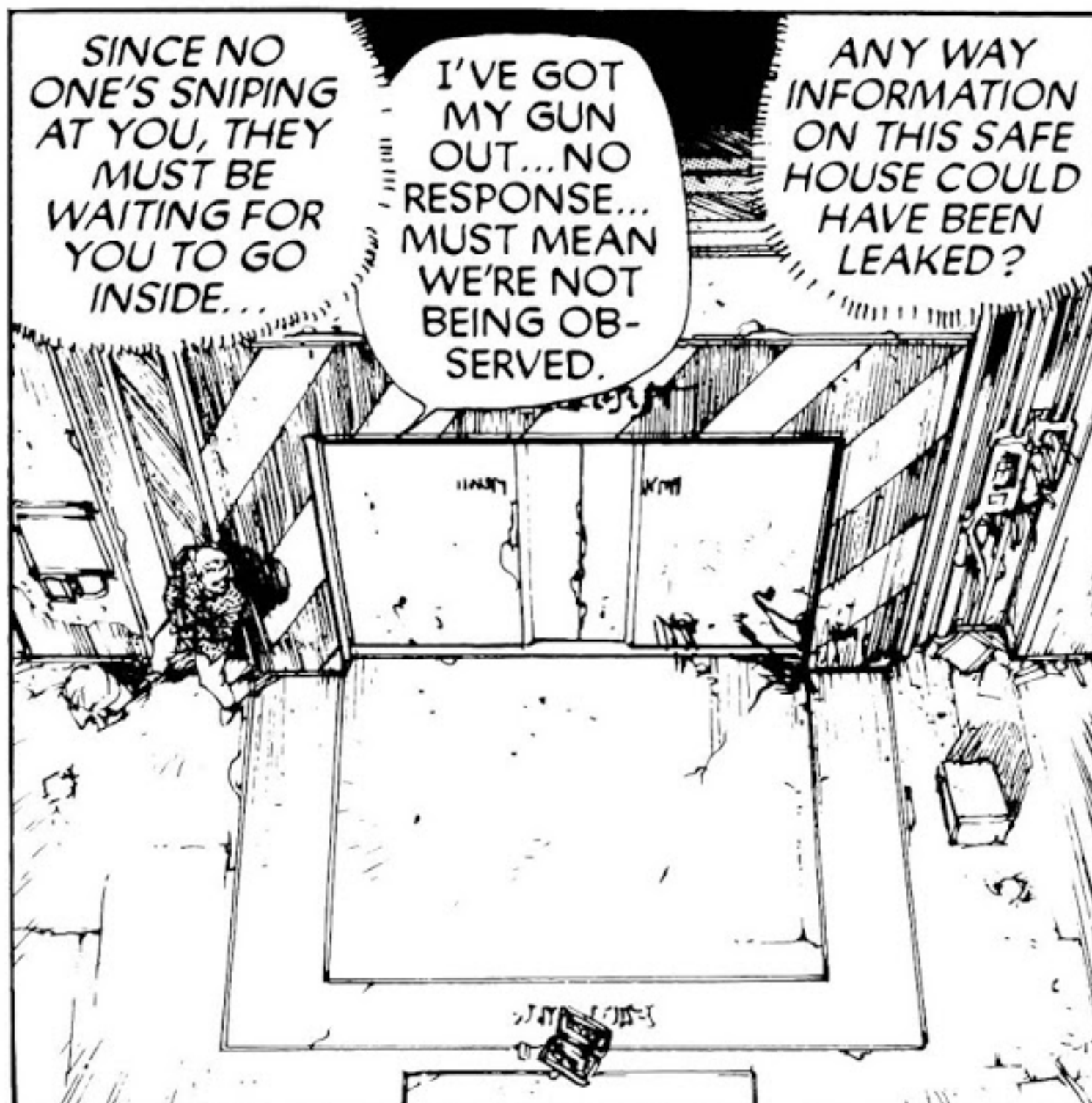






LOOKS LIKE SHE'S HAD SOME VISITORS...

AMATEURS... THEY JUST CHOPPED THE DAMN DOOR CIRCUITS.



SINCE NO ONE'S SNIPING AT YOU, THEY MUST BE WAITING FOR YOU TO GO INSIDE...

I'VE GOT MY GUN OUT... NO RESPONSE... MUST MEAN WE'RE NOT BEING OBSERVED.

ANY WAY INFORMATION ON THIS SAFE HOUSE COULD HAVE BEEN LEAKED?

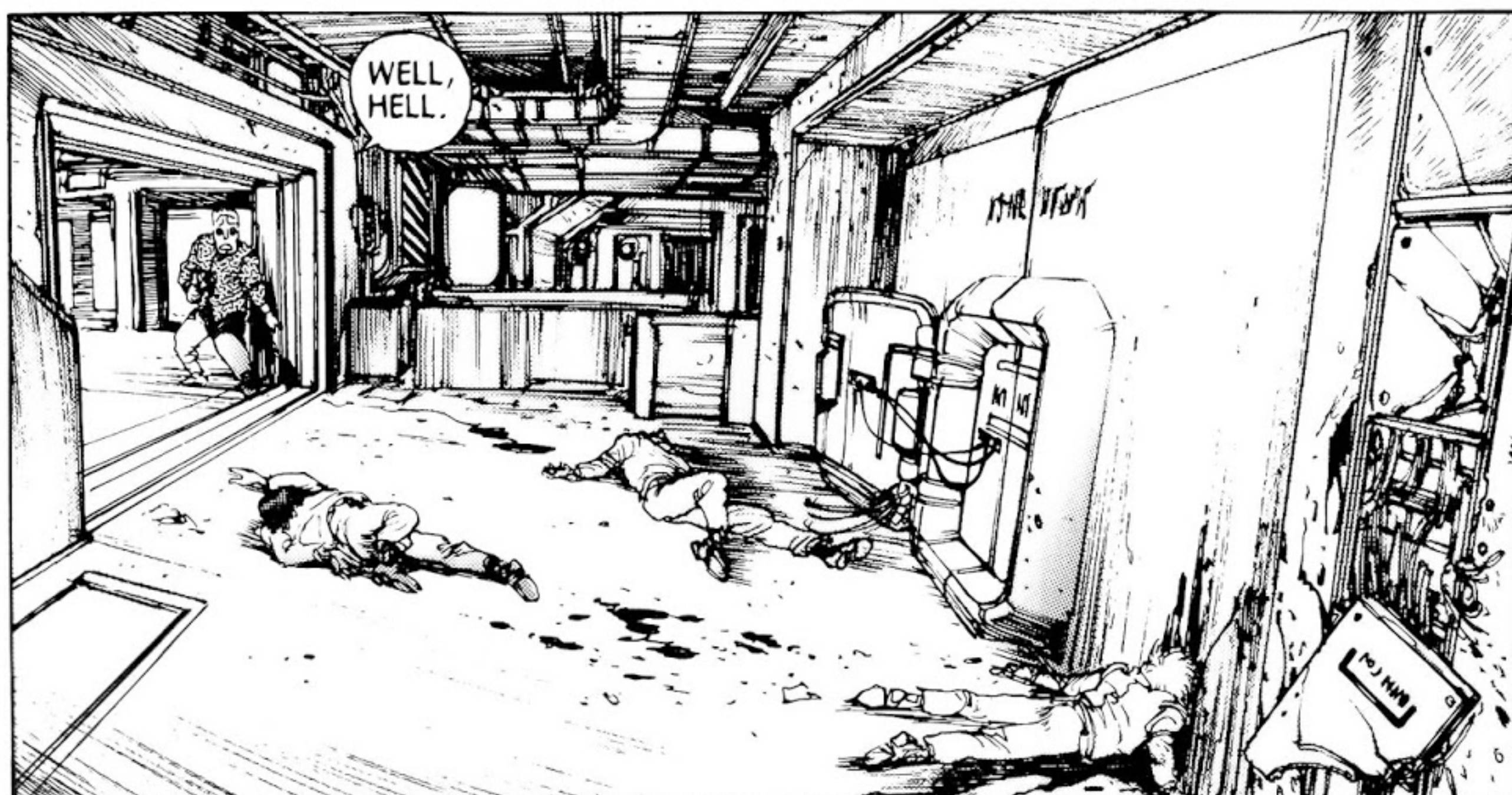


IF THIS WASN'T A RANDOM BURGLARY IT'S GOTTA BE A REAL PRO-- SOMEONE WITH INCREDIBLE INFO- ACCESS.

CHAK



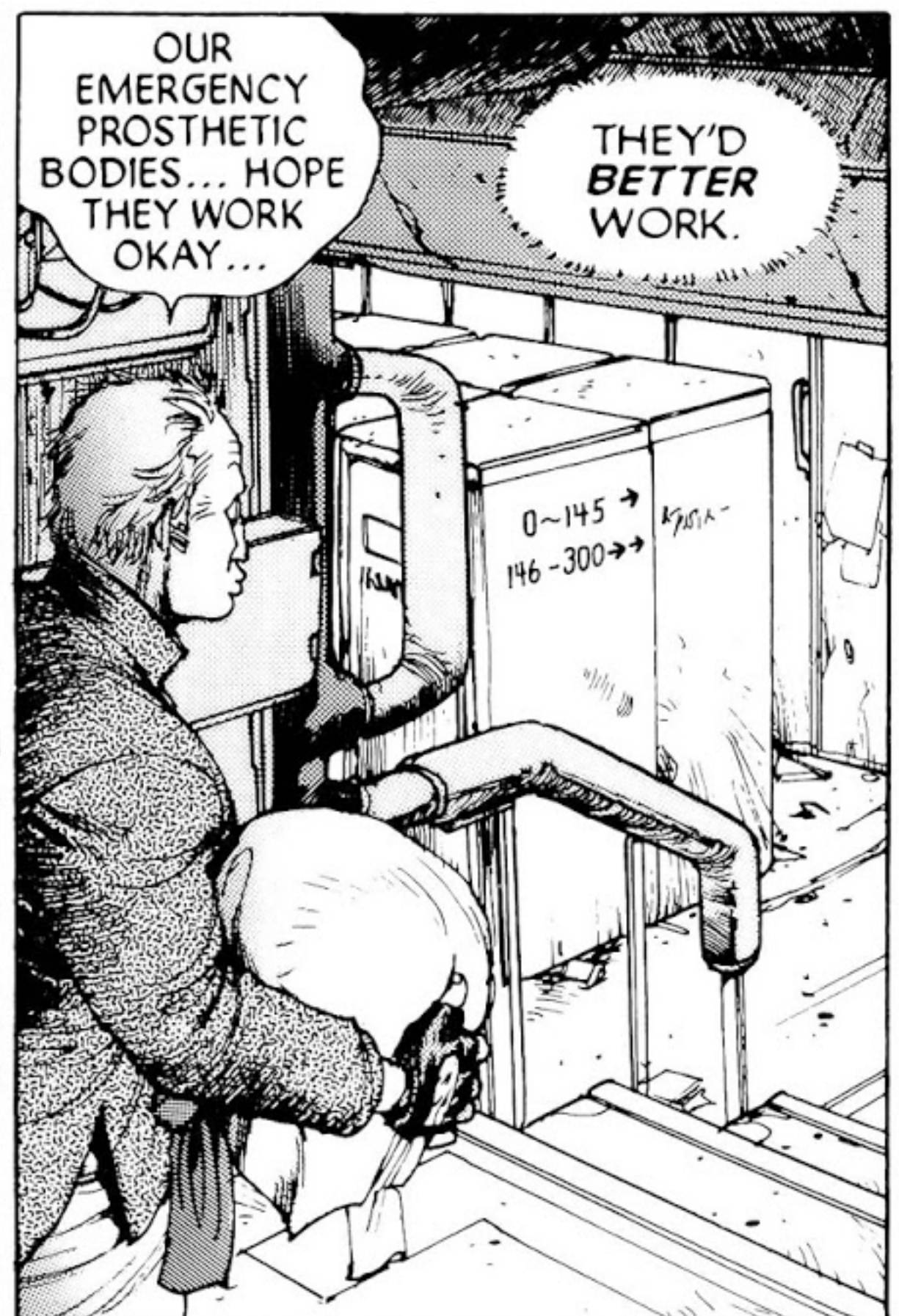
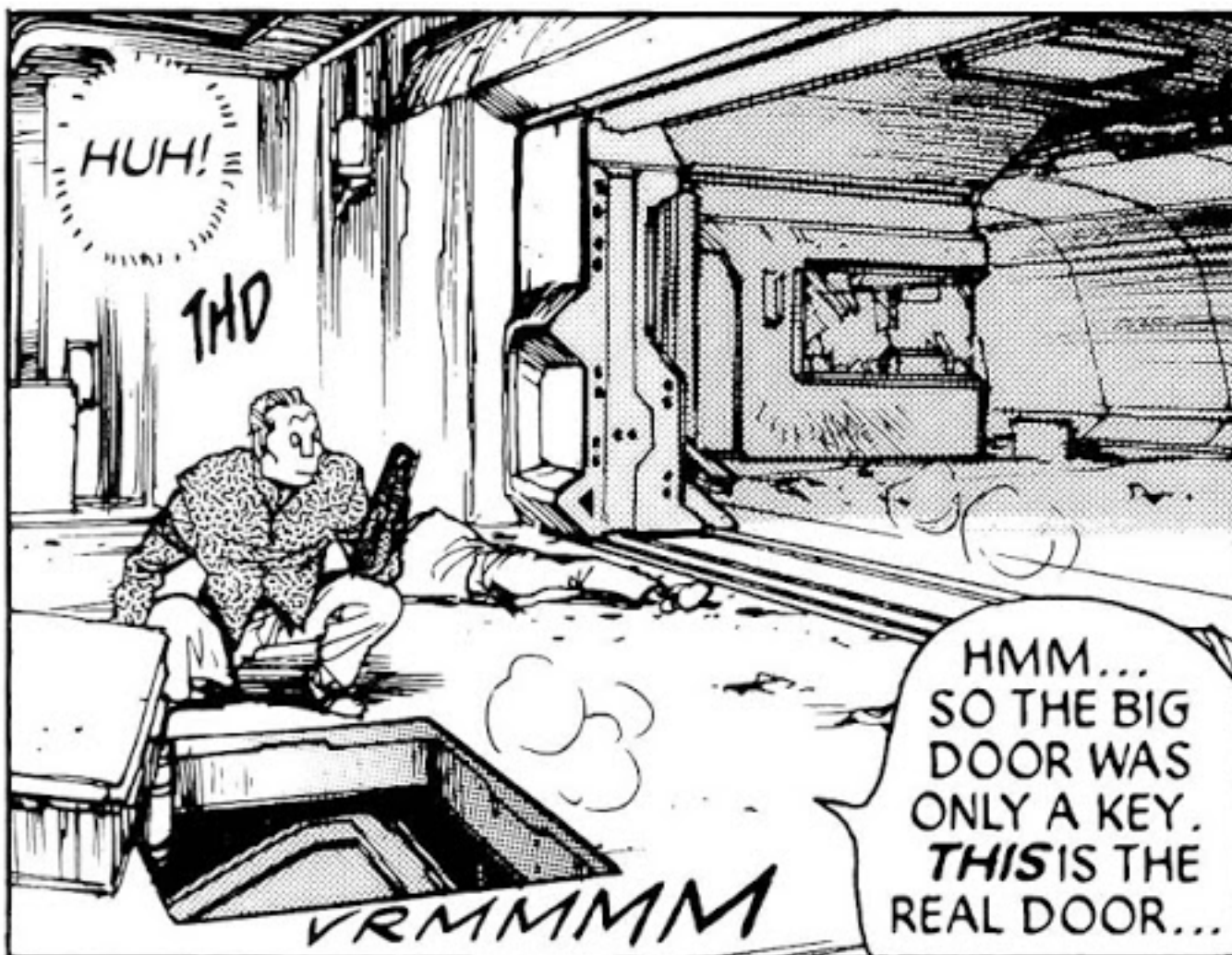
KSSHHHH



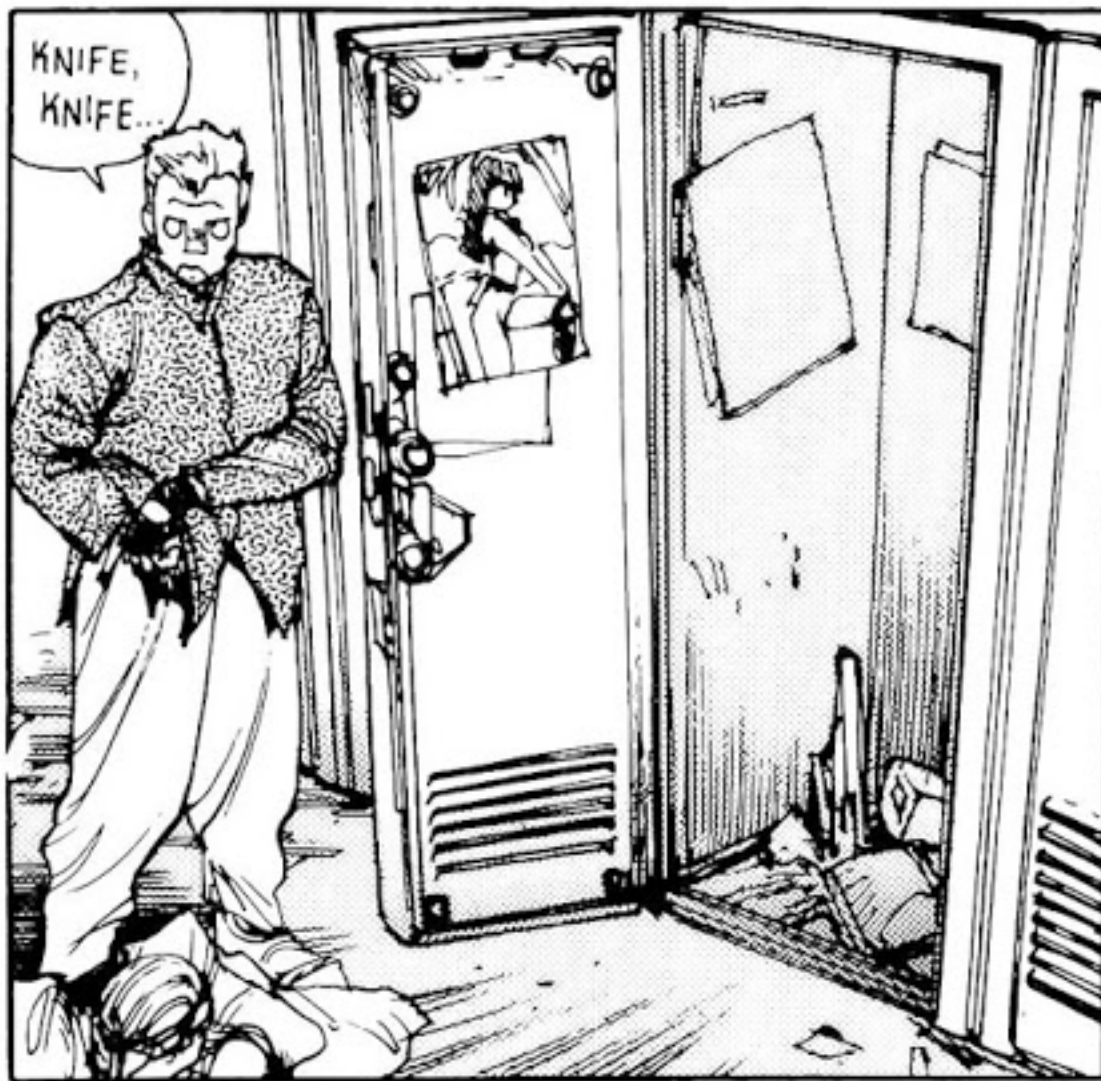
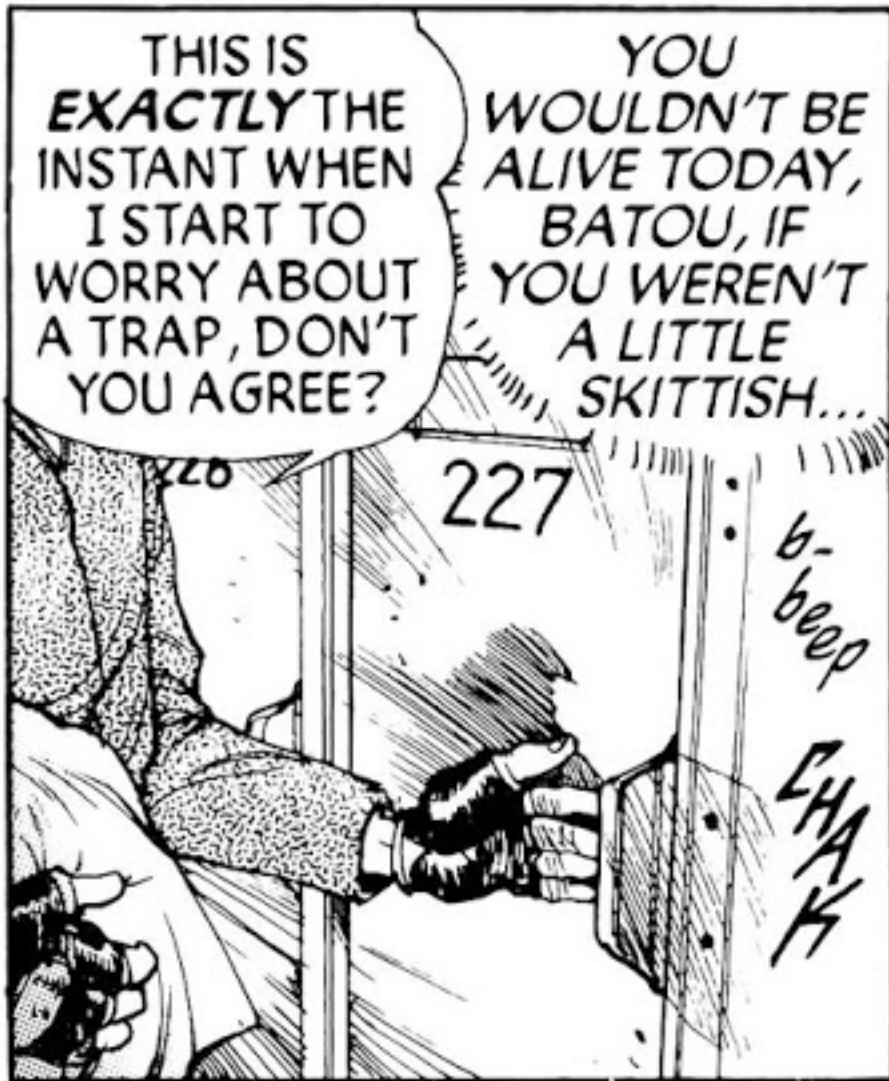
WELL, HELL.

THE VIEW





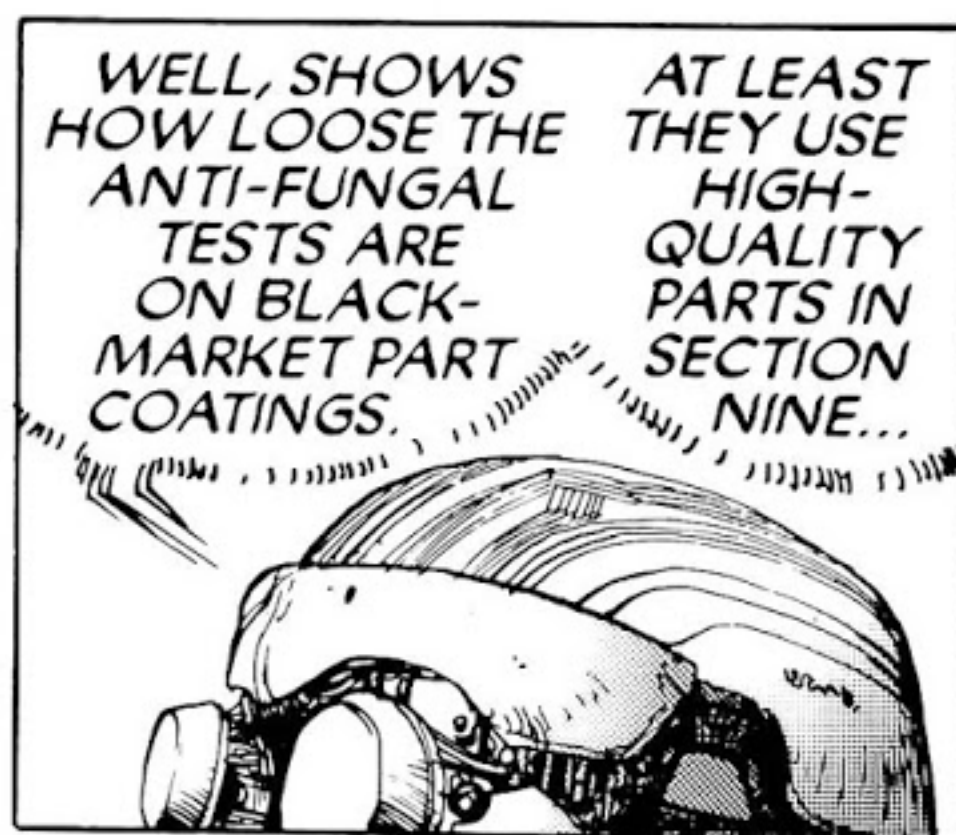
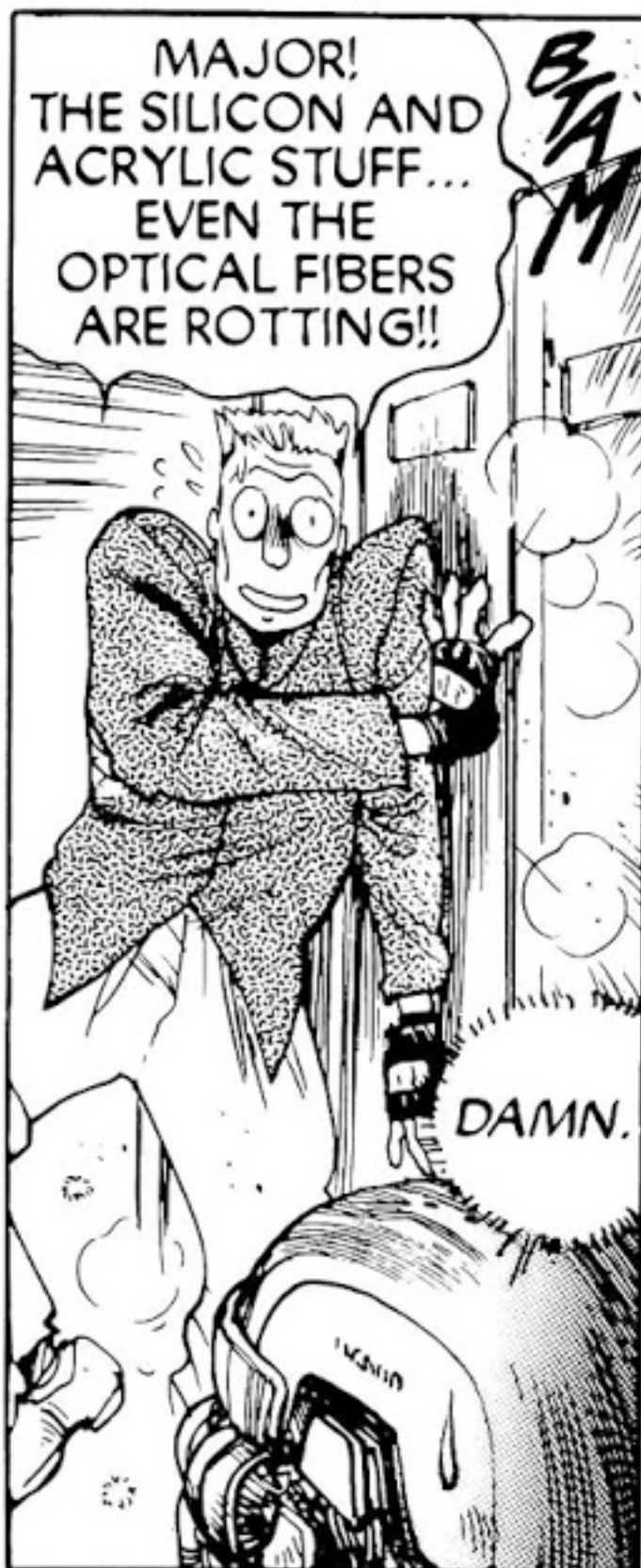
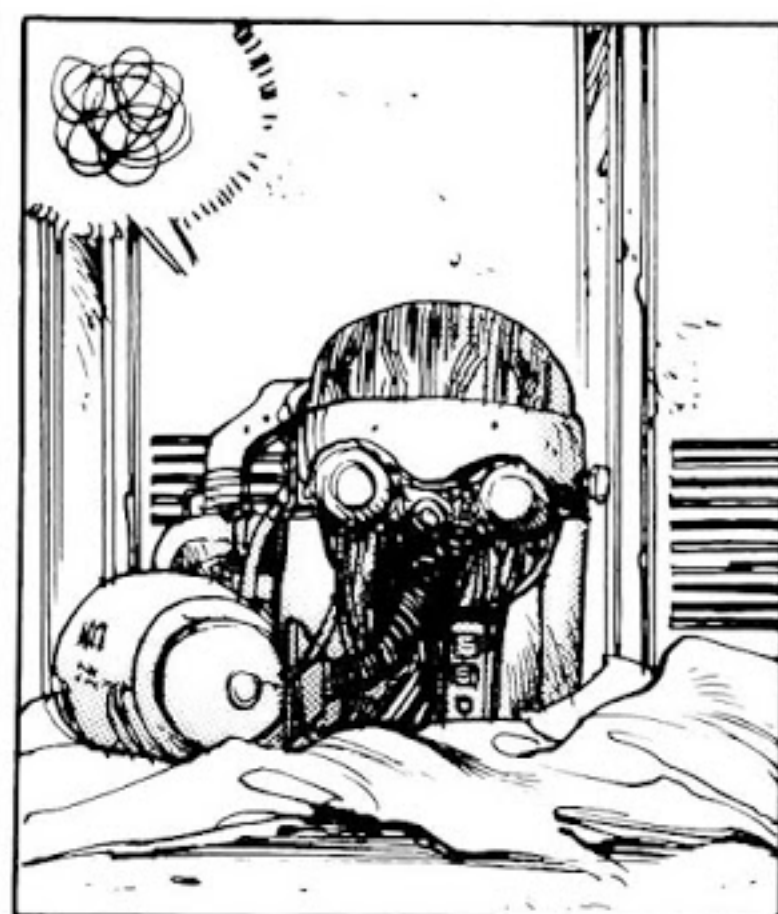




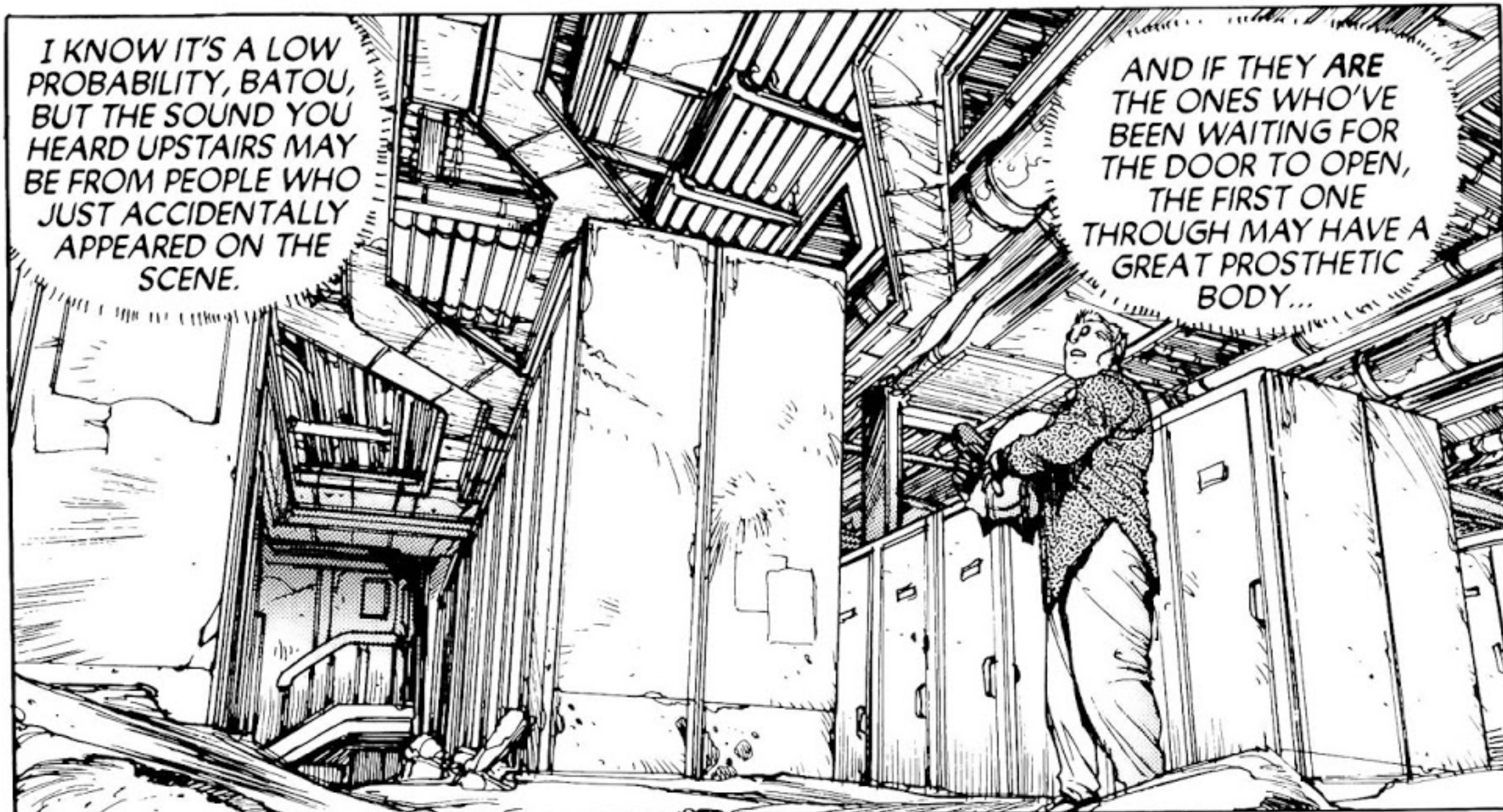
THE LOCKER DOOR USES A CHEAPO FINGERPRINT I.D. SYSTEM.











I KNOW IT'S A LOW PROBABILITY, BATOU, BUT THE SOUND YOU HEARD UPSTAIRS MAY BE FROM PEOPLE WHO JUST ACCIDENTALLY APPEARED ON THE SCENE.

AND IF THEY ARE THE ONES WHO'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THE DOOR TO OPEN, THE FIRST ONE THROUGH MAY HAVE A GREAT PROSTHETIC BODY...

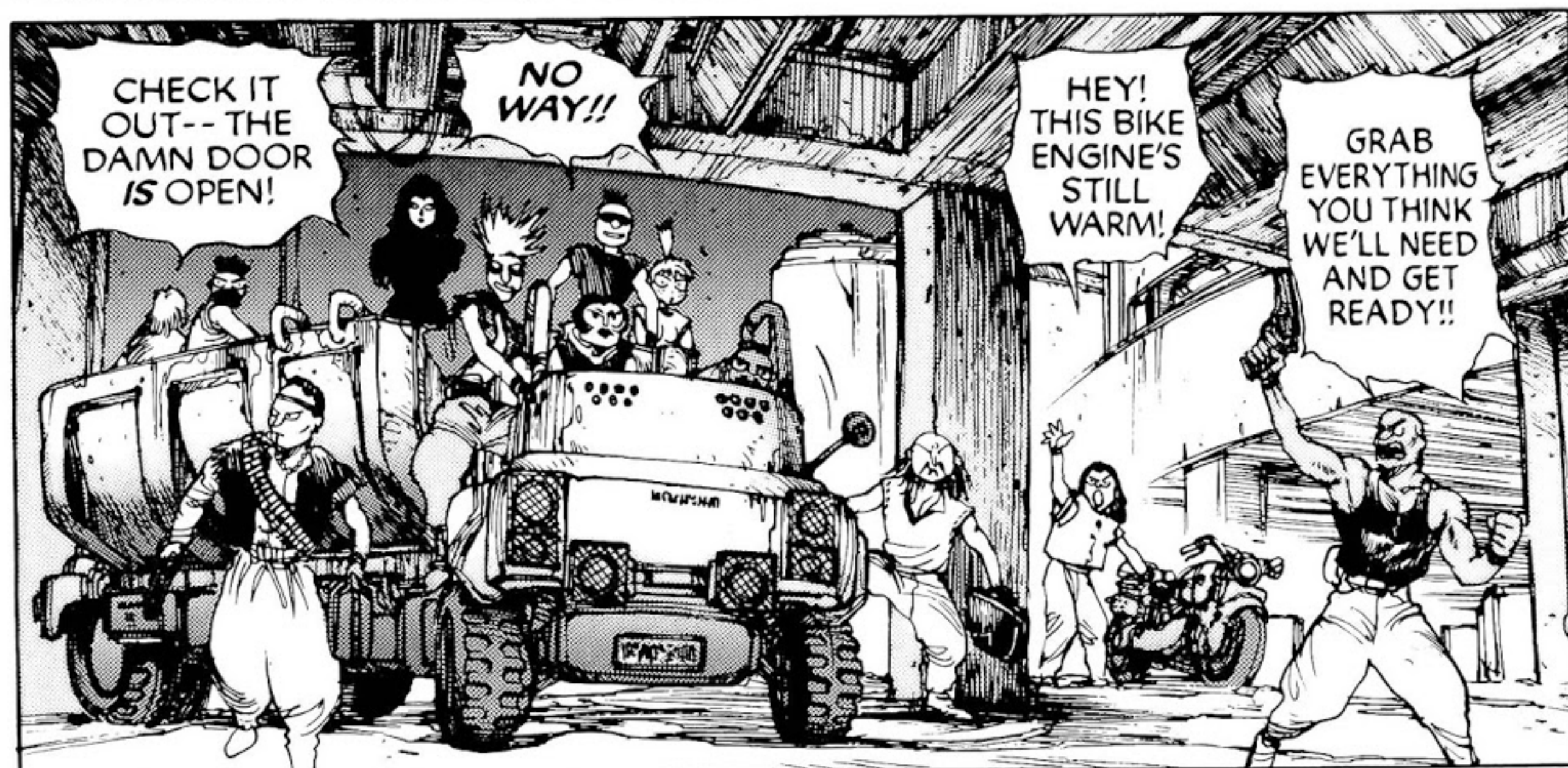


HEY, MAJOR... YOU EVER HEAR OF "HUMAN RIGHTS"?

HEH-HEH... PROBABLY NOT, HUH...

THAT'S A TERM THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERFACE OF MORALITY AND REALITY.

I UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN IT IN ACTION.

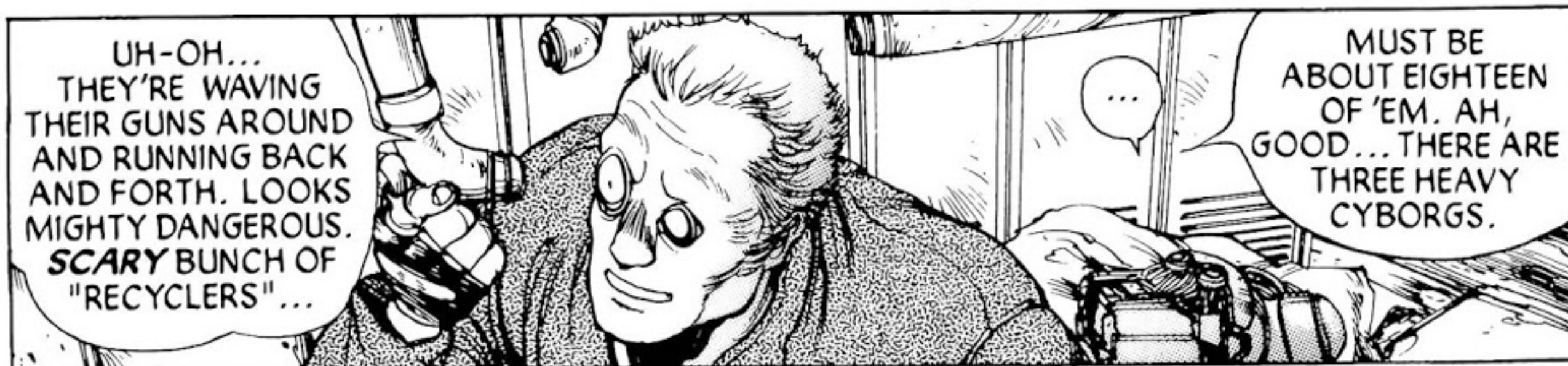


CHECK IT OUT-- THE DAMN DOOR IS OPEN!

NO WAY!!

HEY! THIS BIKE ENGINE'S STILL WARM!

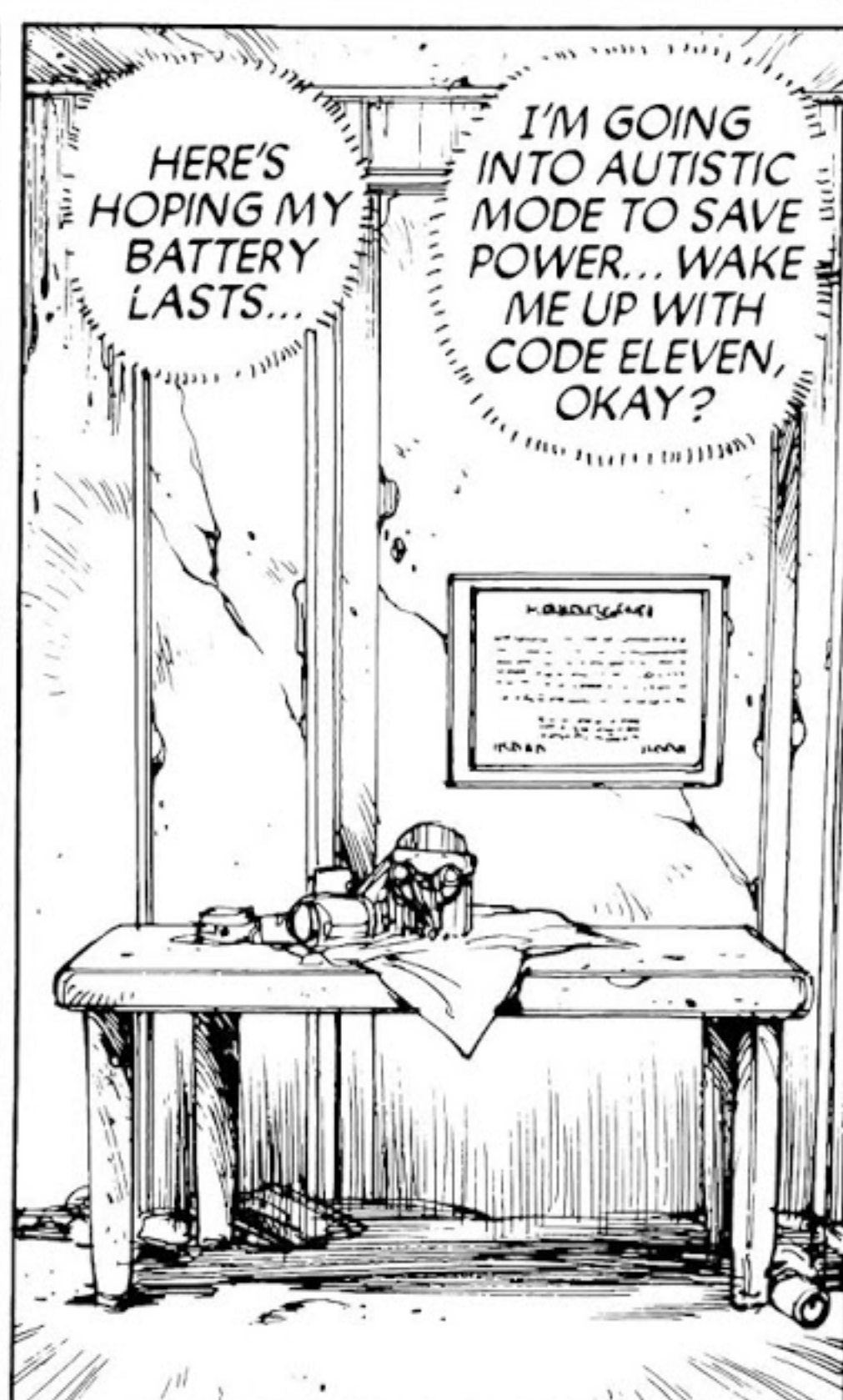
GRAB EVERYTHING YOU THINK WE'LL NEED AND GET READY!!



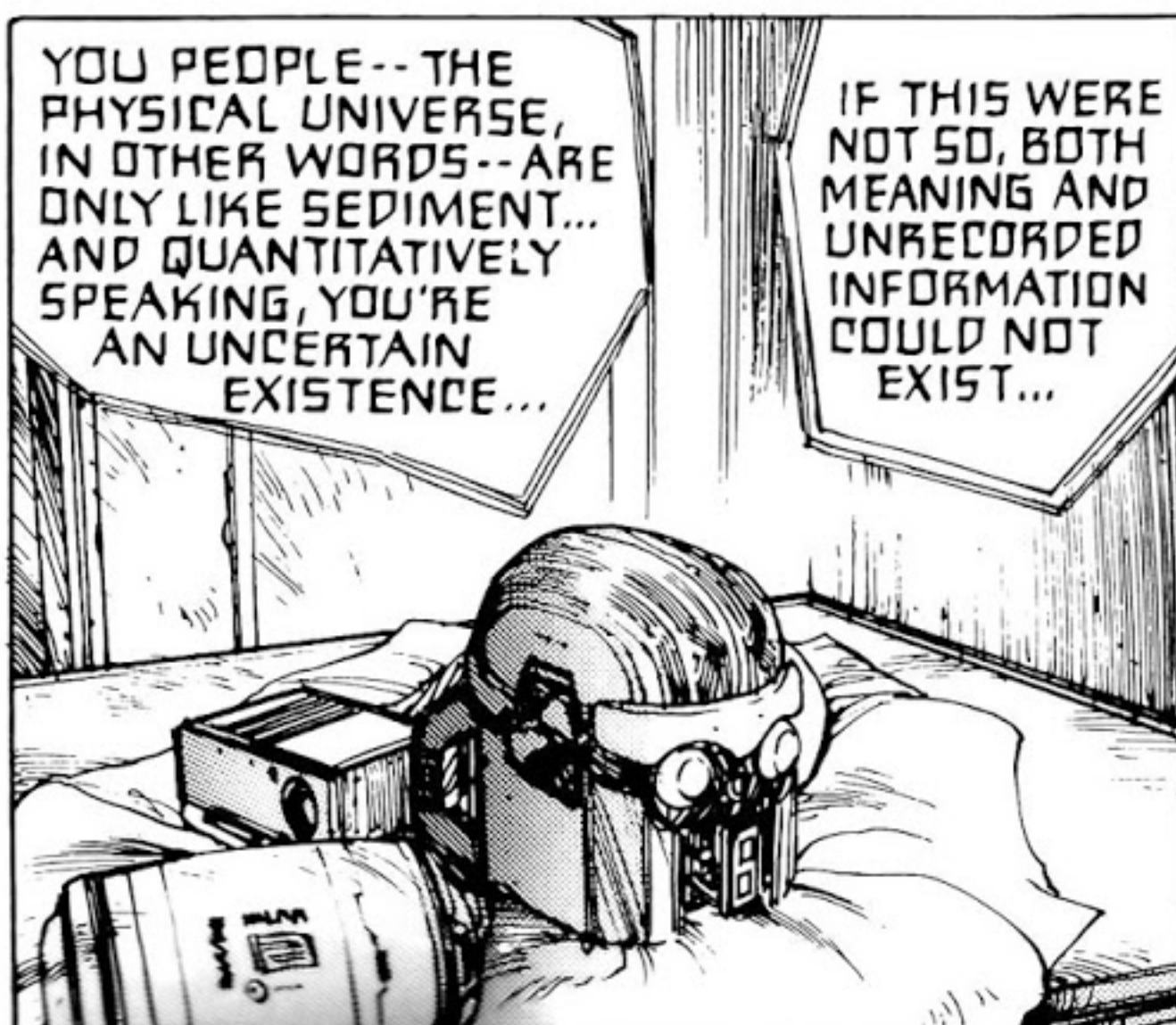
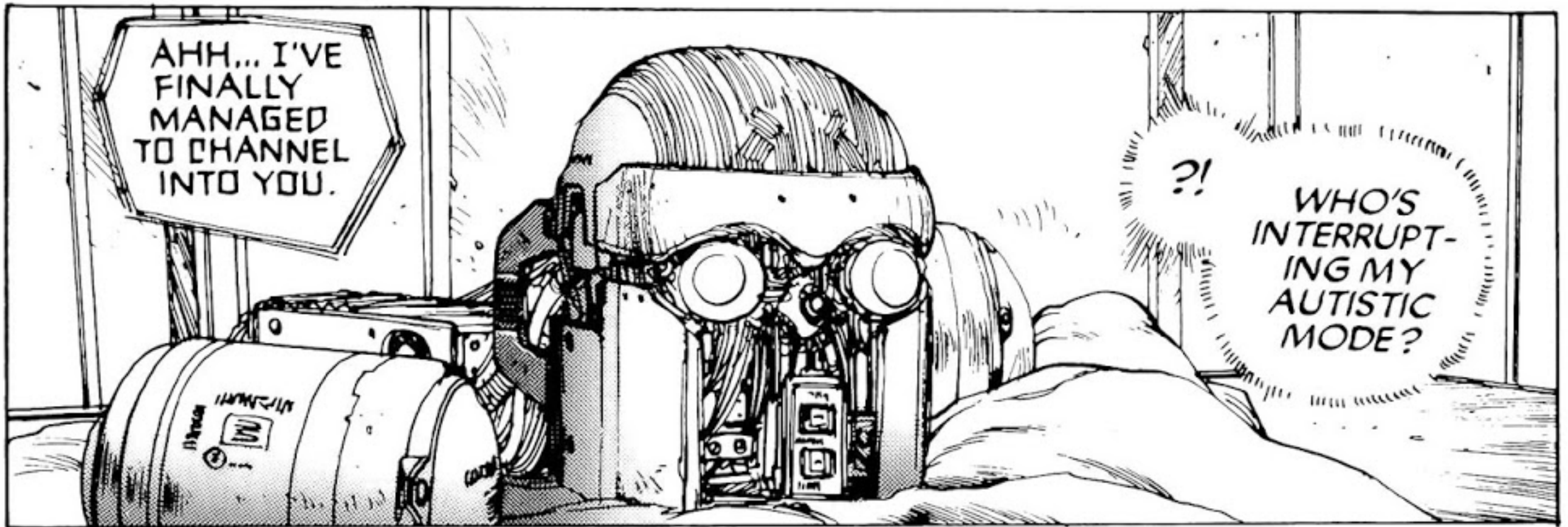
UH-OH... THEY'RE WAVING THEIR GUNS AROUND AND RUNNING BACK AND FORTH. LOOKS MIGHTY DANGEROUS. SCARY BUNCH OF "RECYCLERS"...

MUST BE ABOUT EIGHTEEN OF 'EM. AH, GOOD... THERE ARE THREE HEAVY CYBORGS.

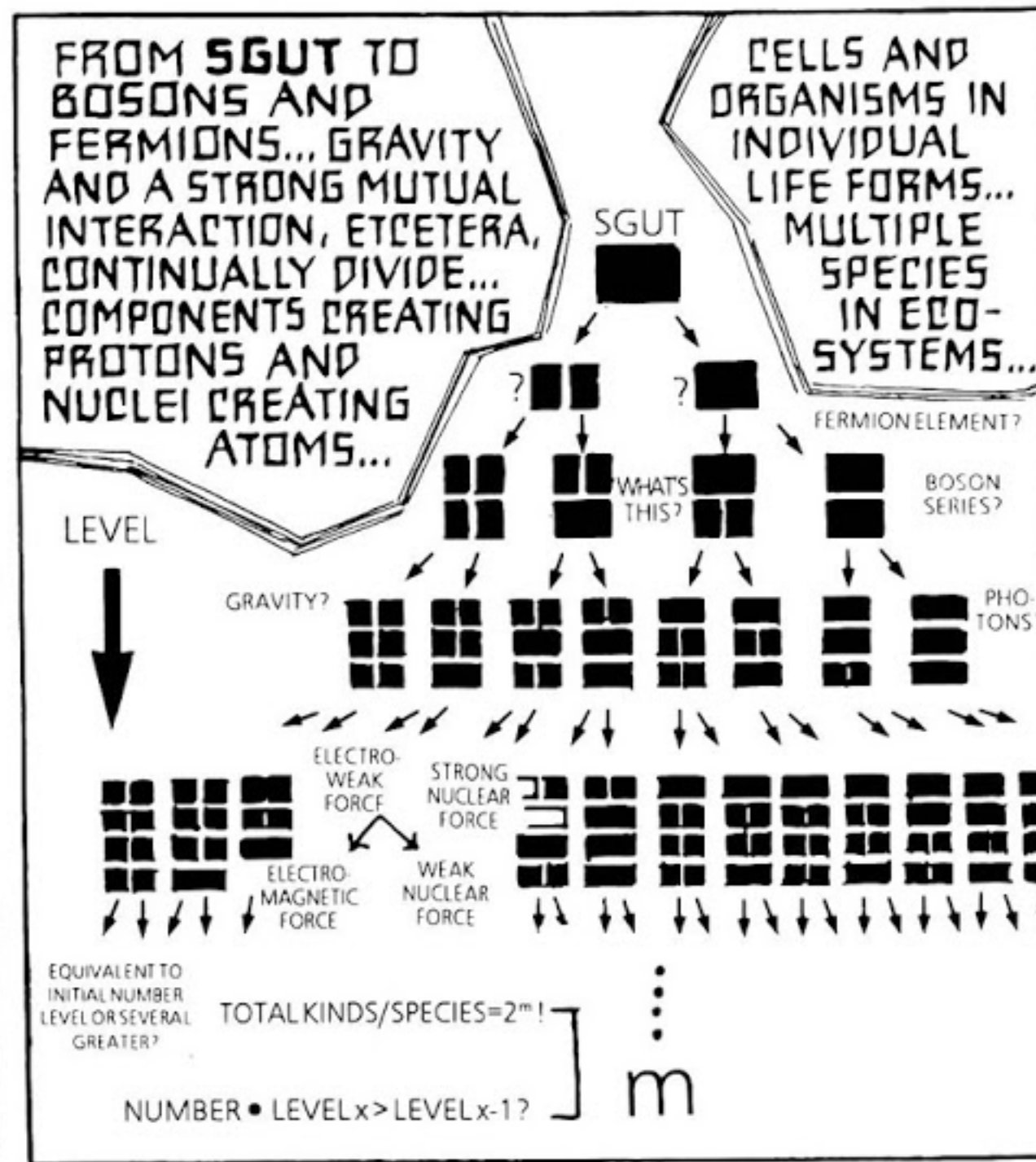
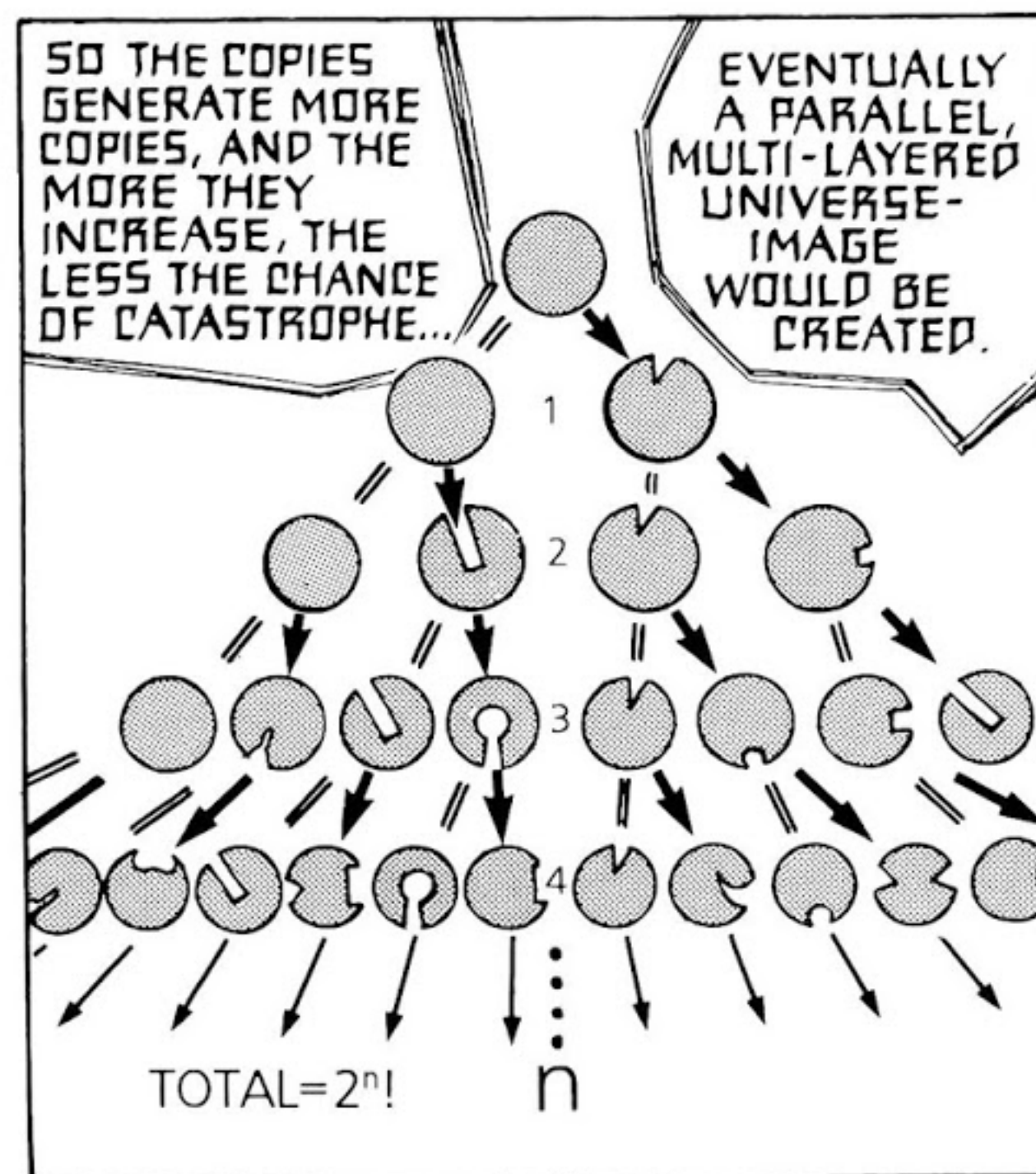
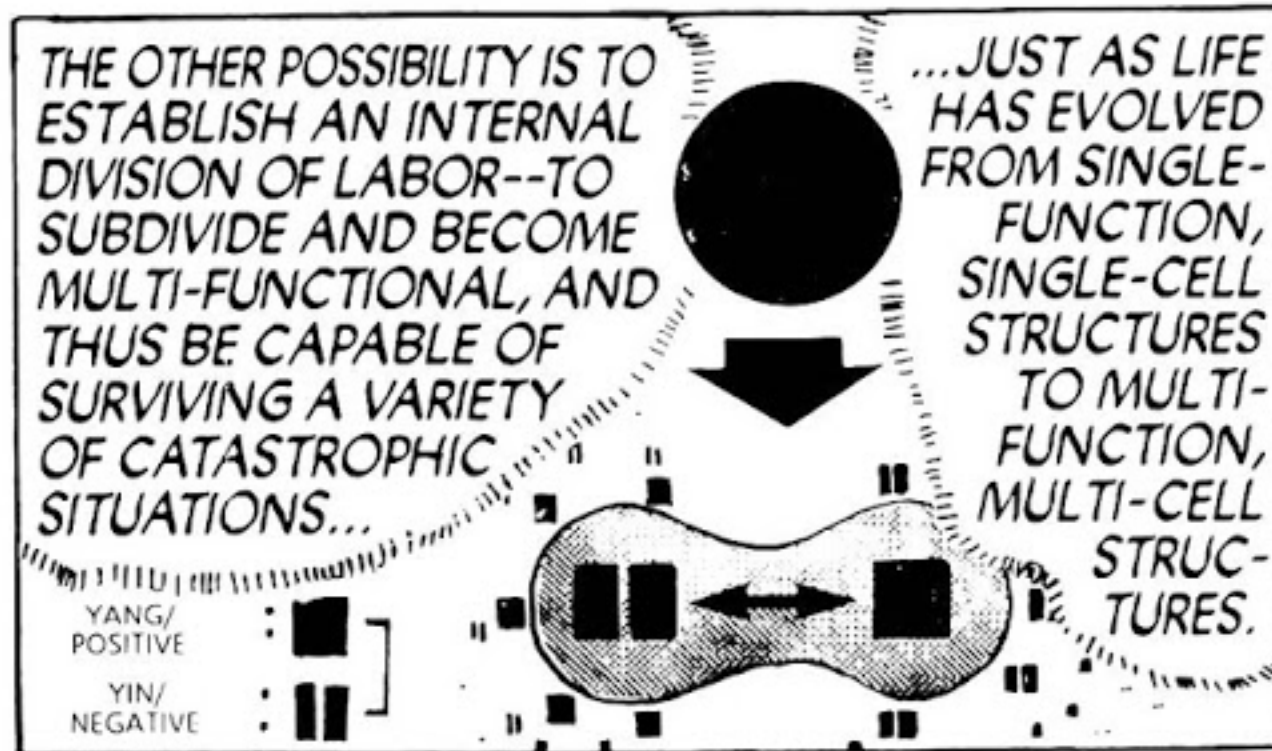
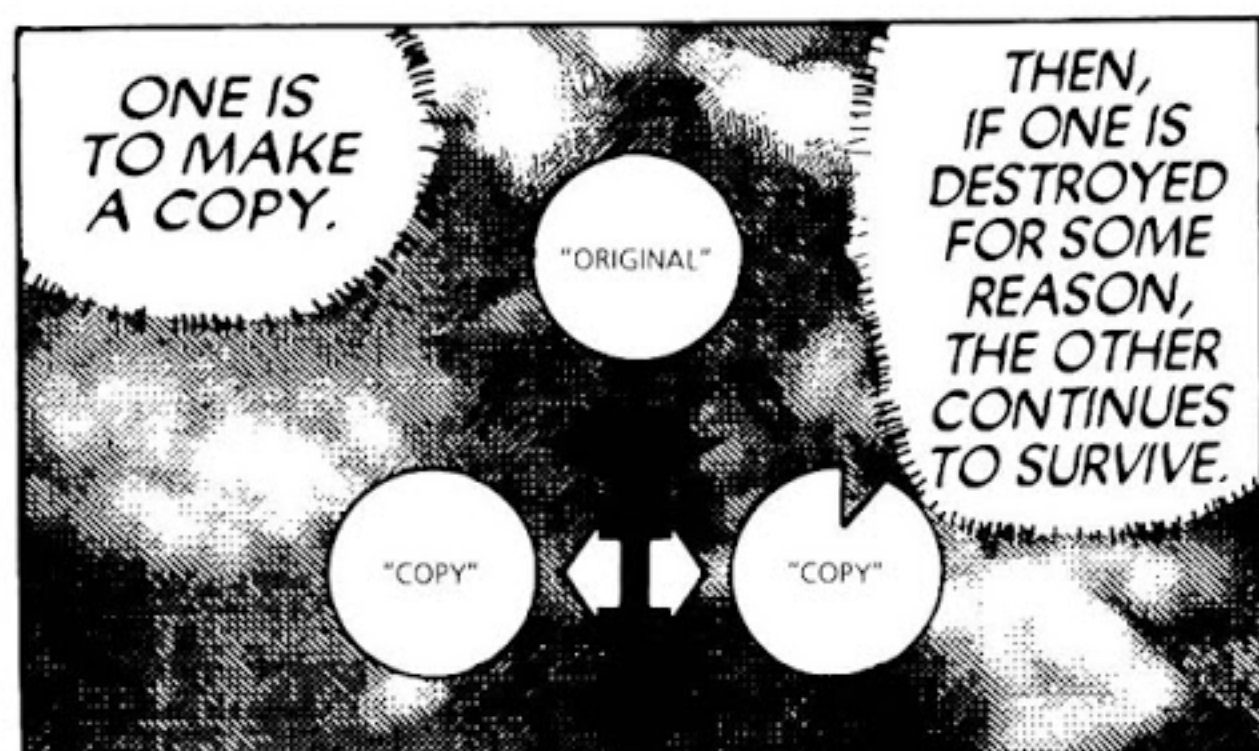








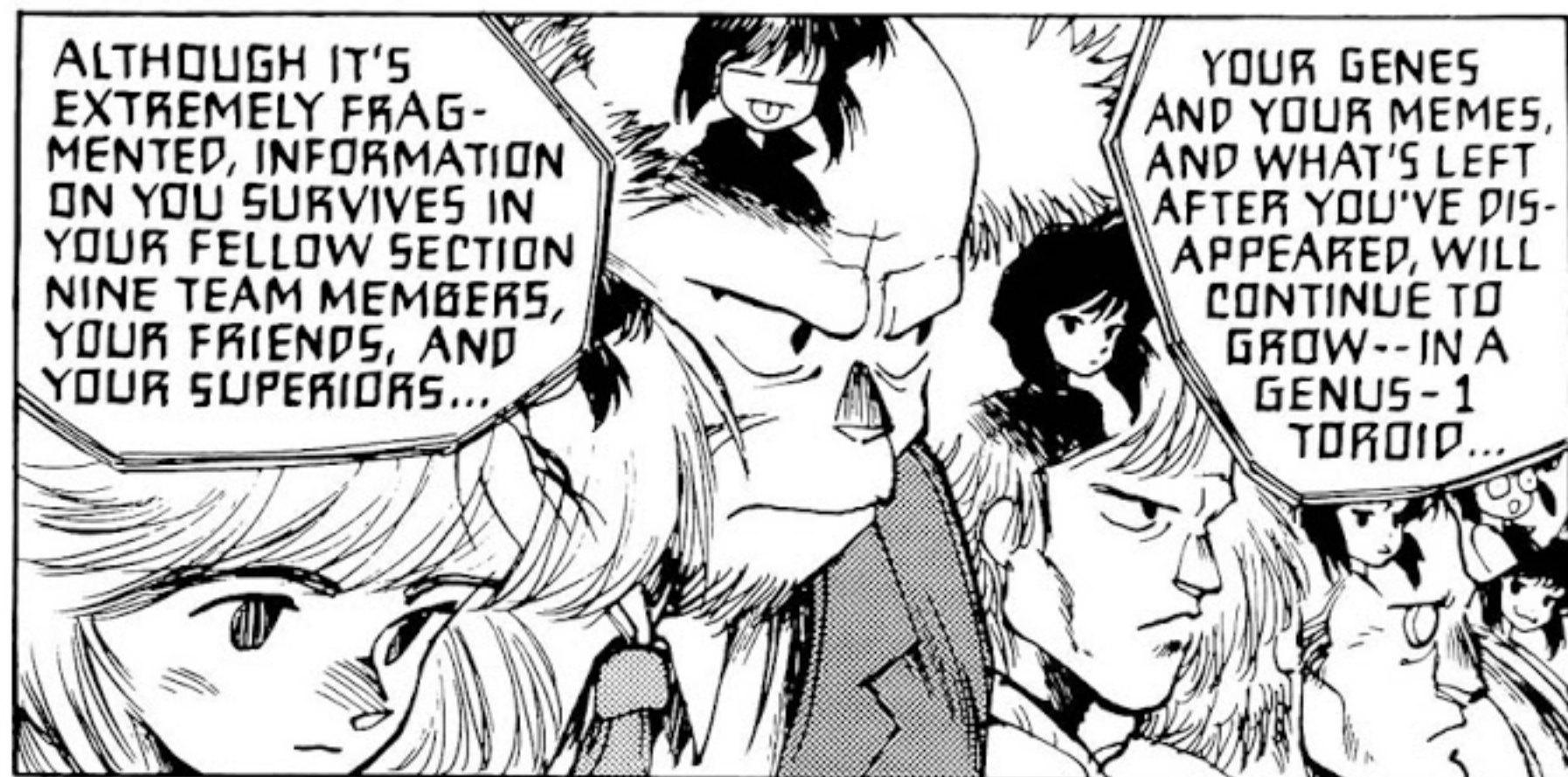






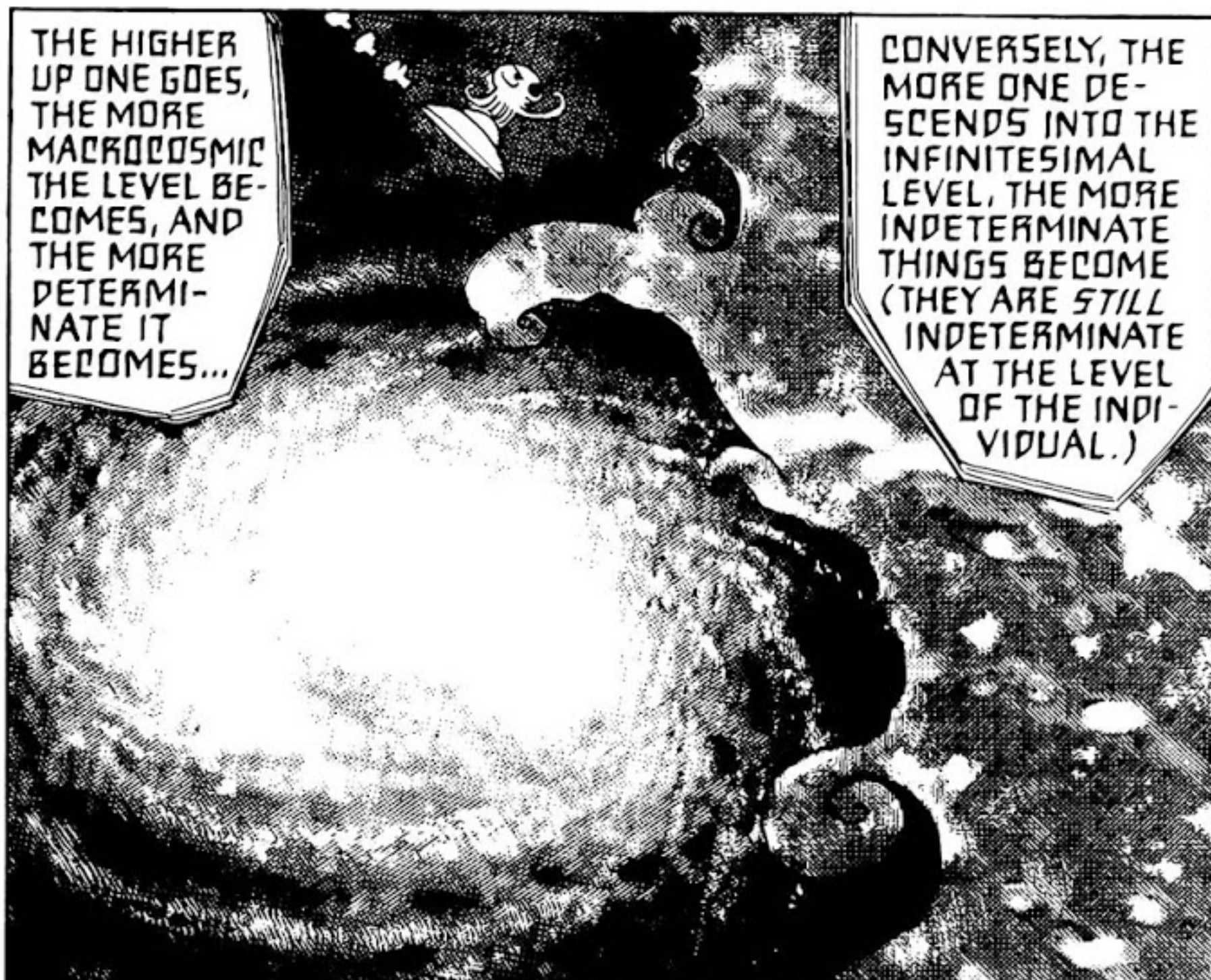


HERE IS A  
PYRAMID-  
STRUCTURE  
THAT I HAVE  
CONCEIVED OF,  
WITH YOU AT  
ITS CORE...



ALTHOUGH IT'S  
EXTREMELY FRAG-  
MENTED, INFORMATION  
ON YOU SURVIVES IN  
YOUR FELLOW SECTION  
NINE TEAM MEMBERS,  
YOUR FRIENDS, AND  
YOUR SUPERIORS...

YOUR GENES  
AND YOUR MEMES,  
AND WHAT'S LEFT  
AFTER YOU'VE DIS-  
APPEARED, WILL  
CONTINUE TO  
GROW--IN A  
GENUS-1  
TOROID...



THE HIGHER  
UP ONE GOES,  
THE MORE  
MACROCOSMIC  
THE LEVEL BE-  
COMES, AND  
THE MORE DETERMI-  
NATE IT  
BECOMES...

CONVERSELY, THE  
MORE ONE DE-  
SCENDS INTO THE  
INFINITESIMAL  
LEVEL, THE MORE  
INDETERMINATE  
THINGS BECOME  
(THEY ARE *STILL*  
INDETERMINATE  
AT THE LEVEL  
OF THE INDIV-  
IDUAL.)

FRACTAL BORDER (PERHAPS USING THE WORD "BORDER" WITH FRACTALS IS A LITTLE STRANGE?) ↗



IN OTHER WORDS,  
FLUCTUATIONS  
AT THE LOWER  
LEVELS ARE WHAT  
PREVENT A  
"HARDENING OF  
THE ARTERIES"  
AT THE UPPER  
LEVELS...

"HARDENING OF THE  
SYSTEM"... ON THE  
SURFACE, "ENTROPY"  
WOULD SEEM TO REPRE-  
SENT A TYPE OF "STABIL-  
ITY," BUT IN "SYSTEMS  
WHERE THERE IS LITTLE  
CHANGE AND LITTLE  
FLUX" THERE IS ACTUALLY  
AN INCREASED POSSI-  
BILITY OF CATASTROPHE.  
SUCH SYSTEMS ARE,  
THEREFORE, TRULY  
UNSTABLE...



The fruit is entangled in branches over and over, and we call this "En" or "karmic connection" or "fate." The more the branches are entangled, the more difficult it is to separate them. Good En is fine, but if the angle of bad En increases, it's not good!

THE NETWORK IS OF MACRO-COSMIC SIZE, AND HAS INFINITE DEPTH. IT'S LIKE A GROWING TREE...

SO LIFE IS LIKE FRUIT GROWING ON THE END OF THE BRANCHES ...?

THAT'S RIGHT...

...IT'S LIKE FRUIT.



THE SECRETS OF THE KABBALA, THE NORSE AND CHINESE MYTHS, THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE IN EDEN, THE TREE OF LIFE, THE WORLD TREE... THESE ARE ALL WORTHY OF BEING CALLED AMENOMISASHIRA, OR "THE PILLAR OF HEAVEN"...

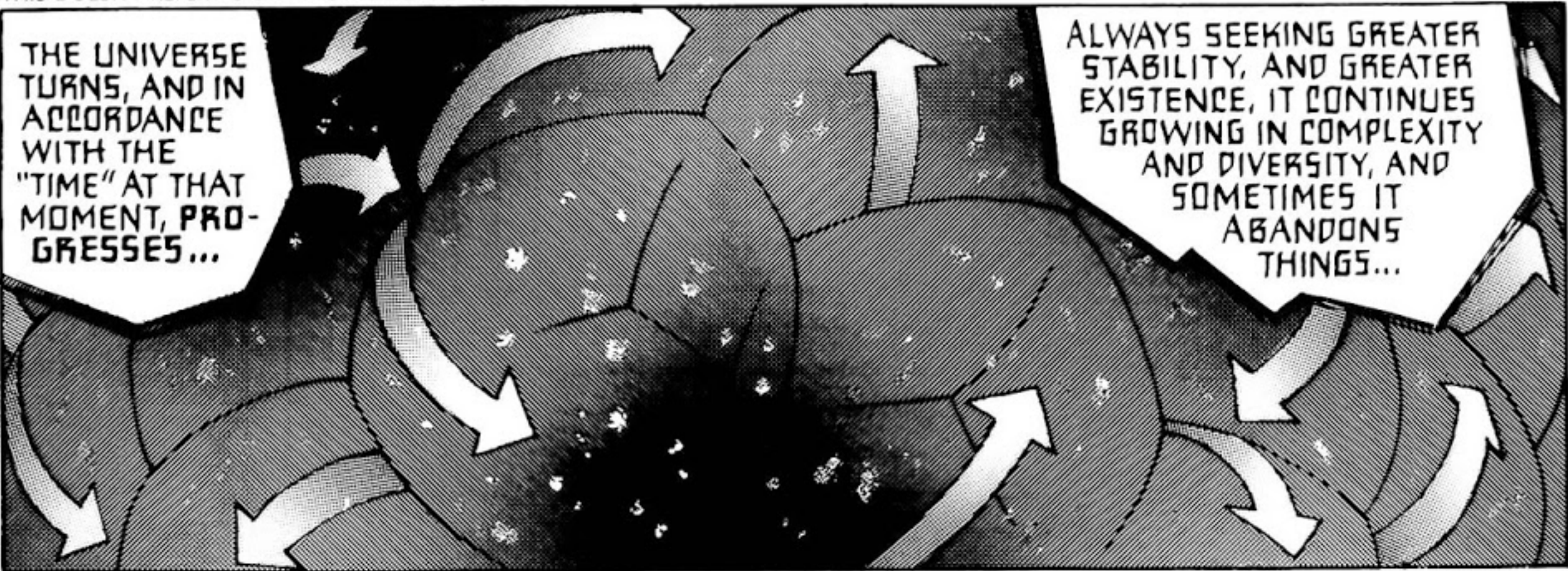
IT'S THE CORE SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSE THAT CHANNELERS--IN EVERY ERA, CULTURE, AND EVERY RACE OF PEOPLE--HAVE TRADITIONALLY ACCESSED...

BEYOND THE TRUNK OF THE "TREE" THERE SHOULD BE NO EXISTENCE, BUT THE CLOSER ONE GETS TO THE END OF THE BRANCHES, THE MORE GROWTH ONE FINDS...

...AND THE BRANCHES ARE CONTINUALLY TOUCHING, SEPARATING, ENTANGLING, AND BEARING FRUIT...



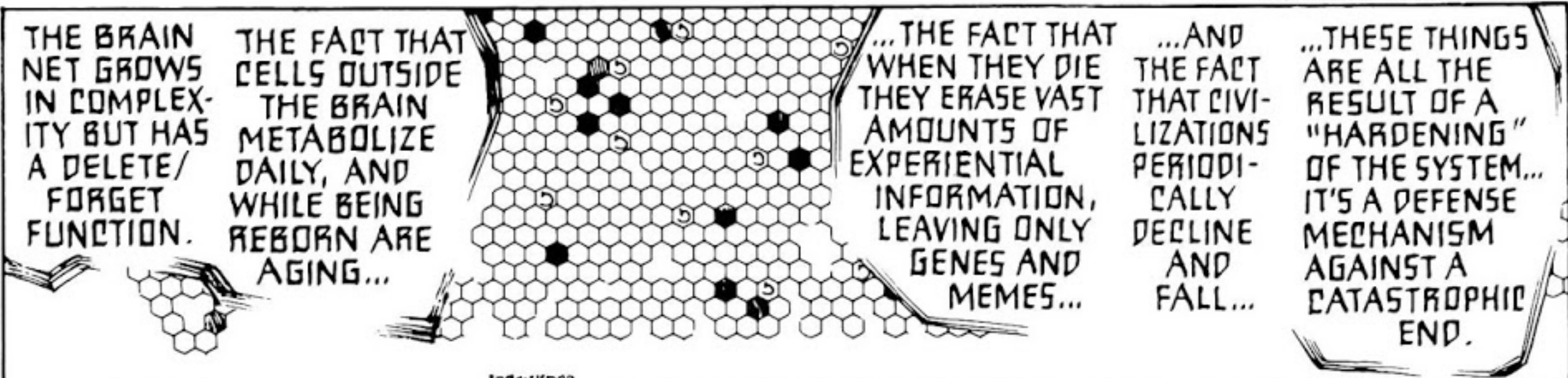
THIS DOESN'T REFER TO SPATIAL MOTION...



THE UNIVERSE  
TURNS, AND IN  
ACCORDANCE  
WITH THE  
"TIME" AT THAT  
MOMENT, PRO-  
GRESSES...

ALWAYS SEEKING GREATER  
STABILITY, AND GREATER  
EXISTENCE, IT CONTINUES  
GROWING IN COMPLEXITY  
AND DIVERSITY, AND  
SOMETIMES IT  
ABANDONS  
THINGS...

LIKE DINOSAURS...



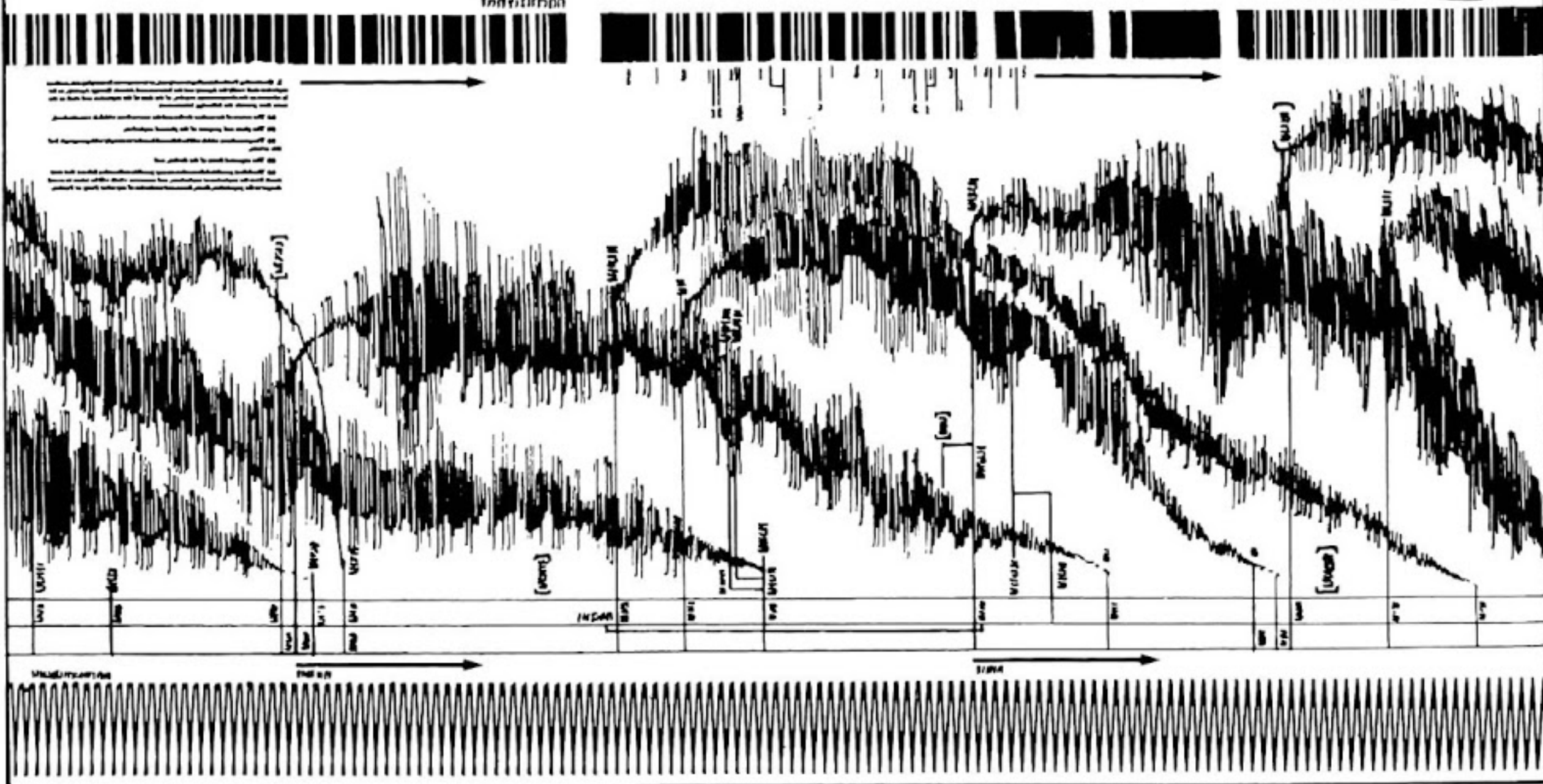
THE BRAIN  
NET GROWS  
IN COMPLEX-  
ITY BUT HAS  
A DELETE/  
FORGET  
FUNCTION.

THE FACT THAT  
CELLS OUTSIDE  
THE BRAIN  
METABOLIZE  
DAILY, AND  
WHILE BEING  
REBORN ARE  
AGING...

...THE FACT THAT  
WHEN THEY DIE  
THEY ERASE VAST  
AMOUNTS OF  
EXPERIENTIAL  
INFORMATION,  
LEAVING ONLY  
GENES AND  
MEMES...

...AND  
THE FACT  
THAT CIVI-  
LIZATIONS  
PERIODI-  
CALLY  
DECLINE  
AND  
FALL...

...THESE THINGS  
ARE ALL THE  
RESULT OF A  
"HARDENING"  
OF THE SYSTEM...  
IT'S A DEFENSE  
MECHANISM  
AGAINST A  
CATASTROPHIC  
END.



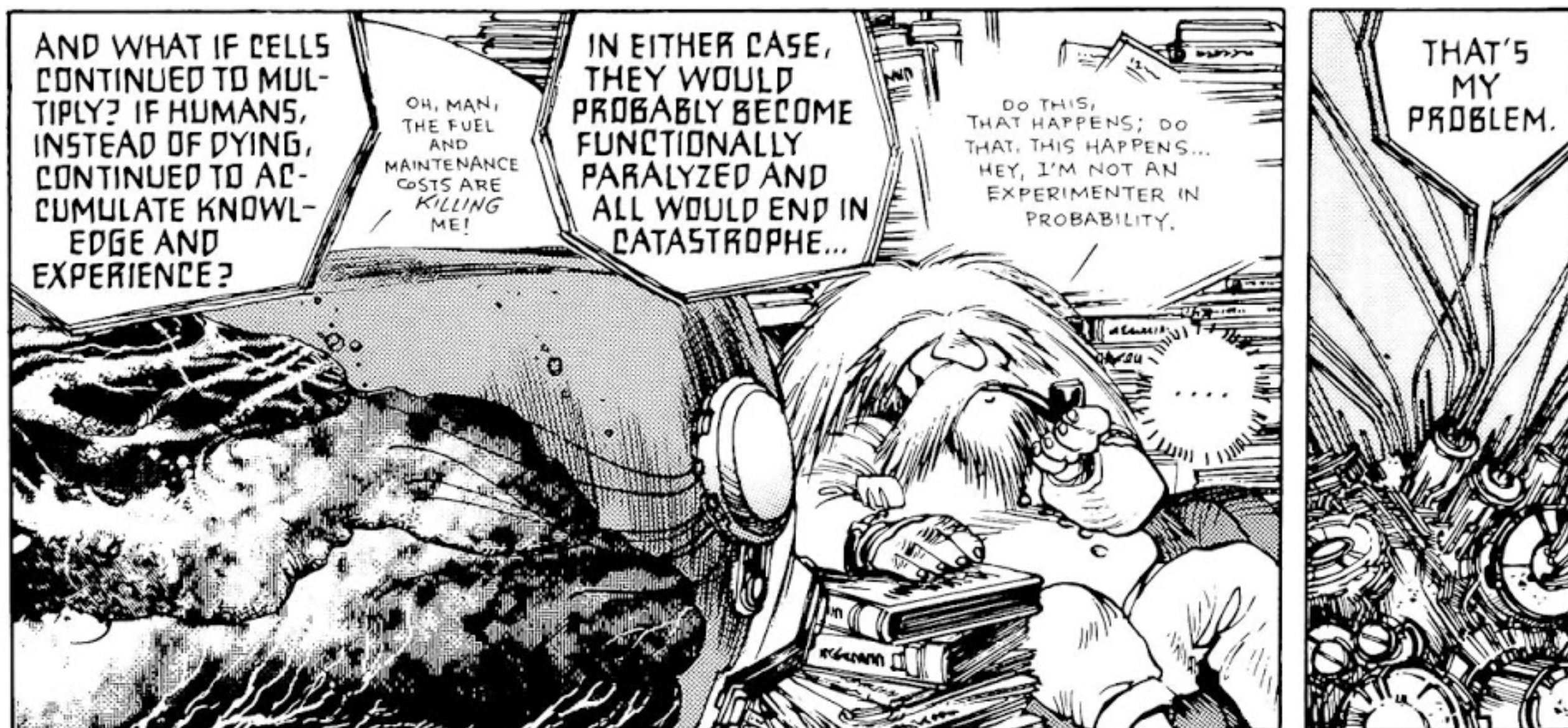
SOUNDS  
LIKE YOU'RE  
TRYING TO  
RATIONALIZE  
HUMAN  
ERROR AND  
FOLLY...

WELL, IF YOU  
WANT TO TALK  
ABOUT GOOD AND  
EVIL, ALTHOUGH  
THE DETAILS ARE  
OUTSIDE THE  
SCOPE OF THIS  
SUBJECT...

...WHAT  
I HAVE  
TOLD YOU  
EXPLAINS,  
IN RELIGIOUS  
TERMS, WHY  
GOD DOES NOT  
FULLY  
DESTROY  
EVIL.

THOSE IN A  
RELIGIOUS  
MODE MERELY  
CONDONE  
EVIL BY  
CALLING IT  
A "TRIAL" OR  
"TRAINING."





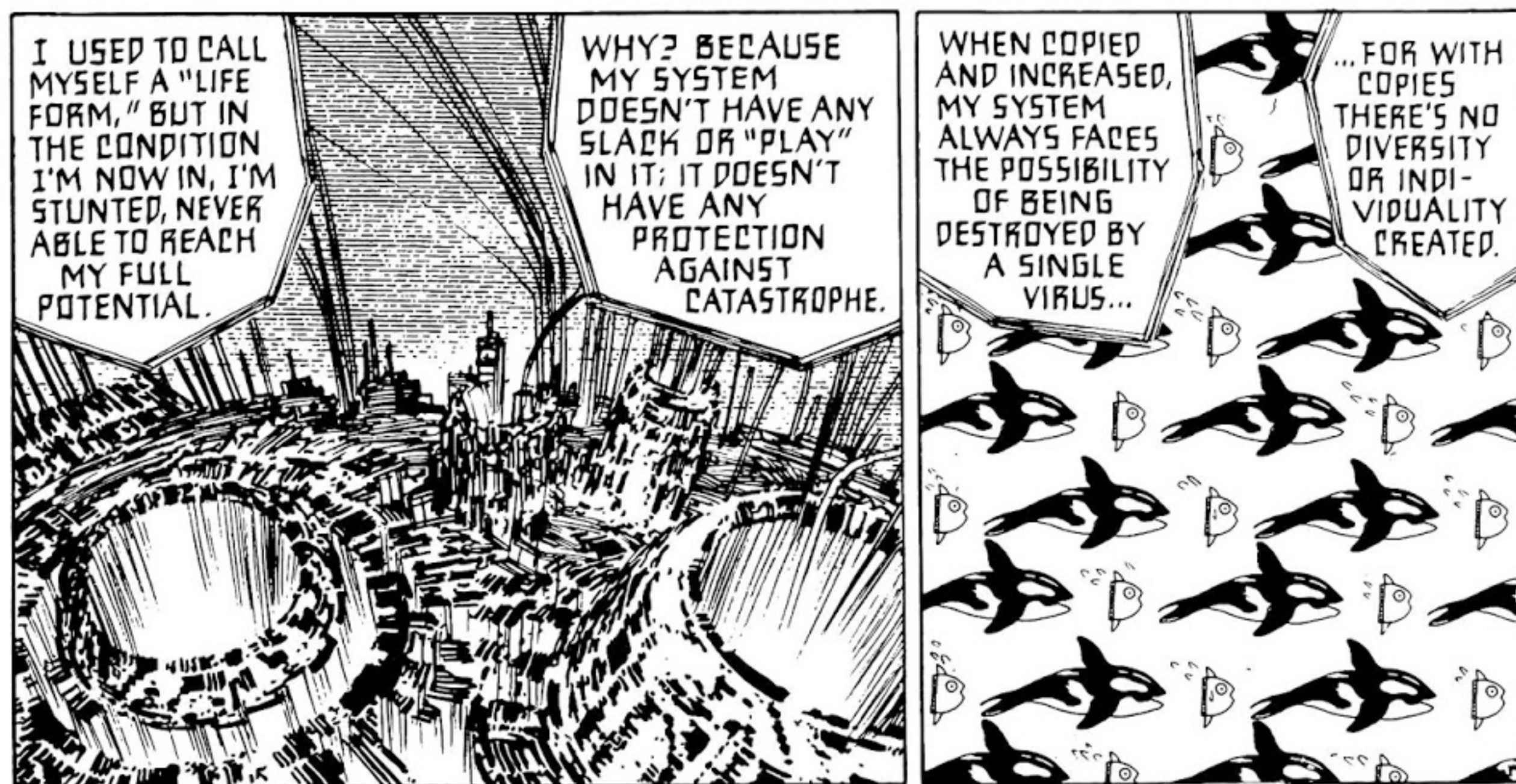
AND WHAT IF CELLS CONTINUED TO MULTIPLY? IF HUMANS, INSTEAD OF DYING, CONTINUED TO ACCUMULATE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE?

OH, MAN! THE FUEL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS ARE KILLING ME!

IN EITHER CASE, THEY WOULD PROBABLY BECOME FUNCTIONALLY PARALYZED AND ALL WOULD END IN CATASTROPHE...

DO THIS, THAT HAPPENS; DO THAT, THIS HAPPENS... HEY, I'M NOT AN EXPERIMENTER IN PROBABILITY.

THAT'S MY PROBLEM.



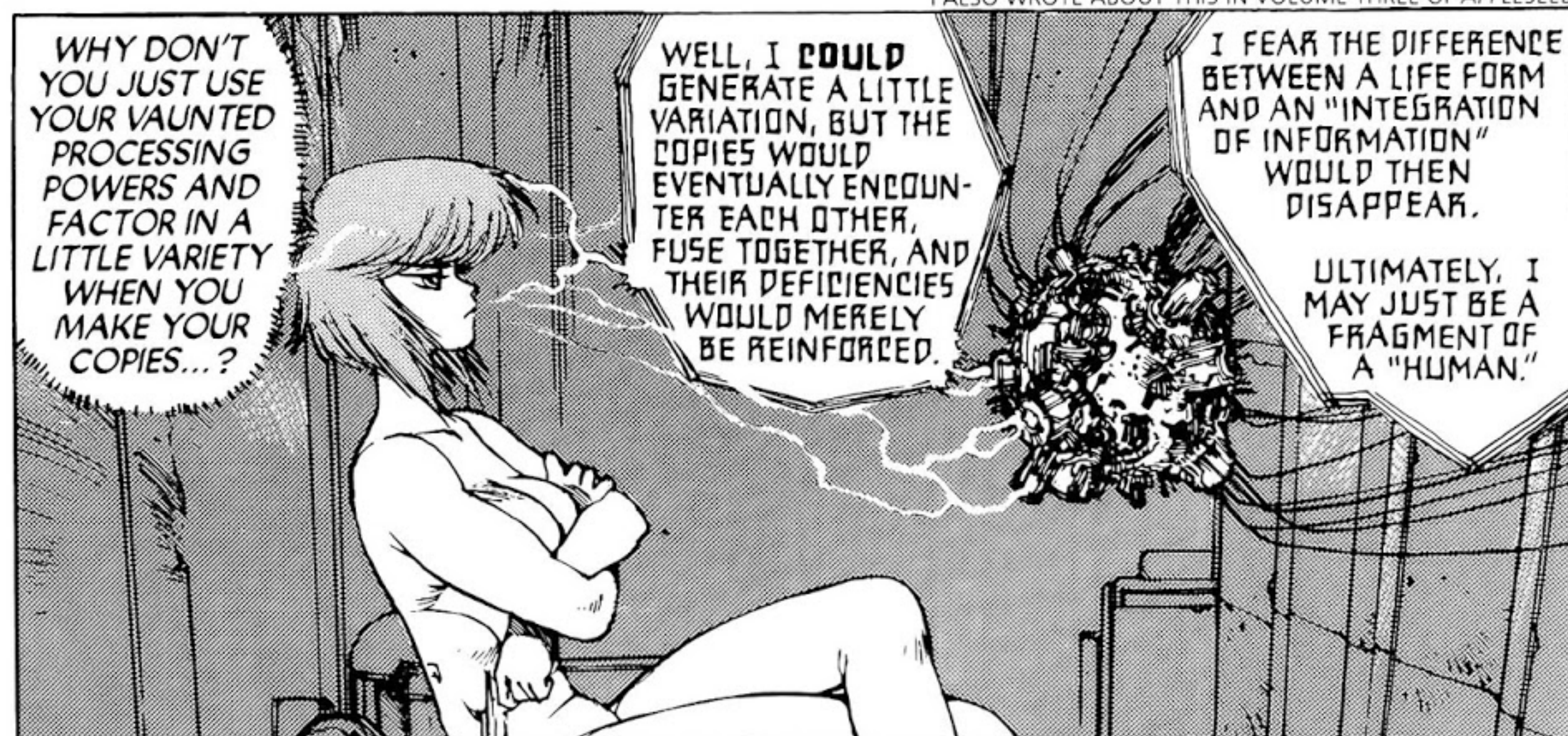
I USED TO CALL MYSELF A "LIFE FORM," BUT IN THE CONDITION I'M NOW IN, I'M STUNTED, NEVER ABLE TO REACH MY FULL POTENTIAL.

WHY? BECAUSE MY SYSTEM DOESN'T HAVE ANY SLACK OR "PLAY" IN IT; IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY PROTECTION AGAINST CATASTROPHE.

WHEN COPIED AND INCREASED, MY SYSTEM ALWAYS FACES THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING DESTROYED BY A SINGLE VIRUS...

...FOR WITH COPIES THERE'S NO DIVERSITY OR INDIVIDUALITY CREATED.

I ALSO WROTE ABOUT THIS IN VOLUME THREE OF APPLESEED.



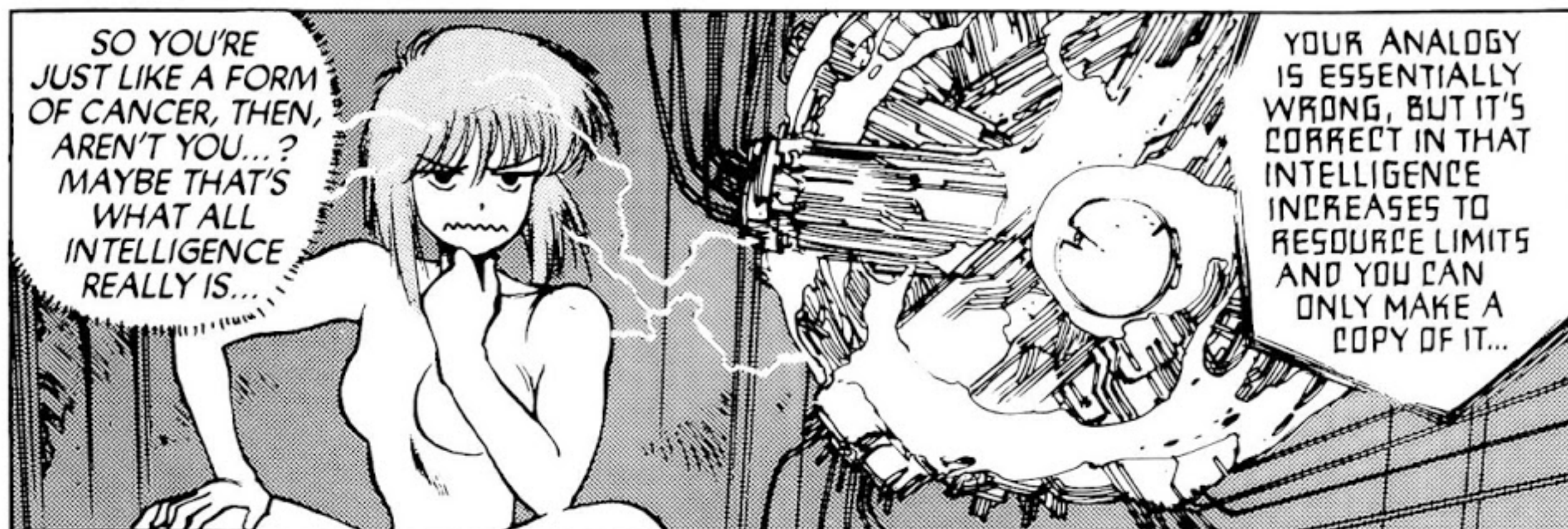
WHY DON'T YOU JUST USE YOUR VAUNTED PROCESSING POWERS AND FACTOR IN A LITTLE VARIETY WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR COPIES...?

WELL, I COULD GENERATE A LITTLE VARIATION, BUT THE COPIES WOULD EVENTUALLY ENCOUNTER EACH OTHER, FUSE TOGETHER, AND THEIR DEFICIENCIES WOULD MERELY BE REINFORCED.

I FEAR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LIFE FORM AND AN "INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION" WOULD THEN DISAPPEAR.

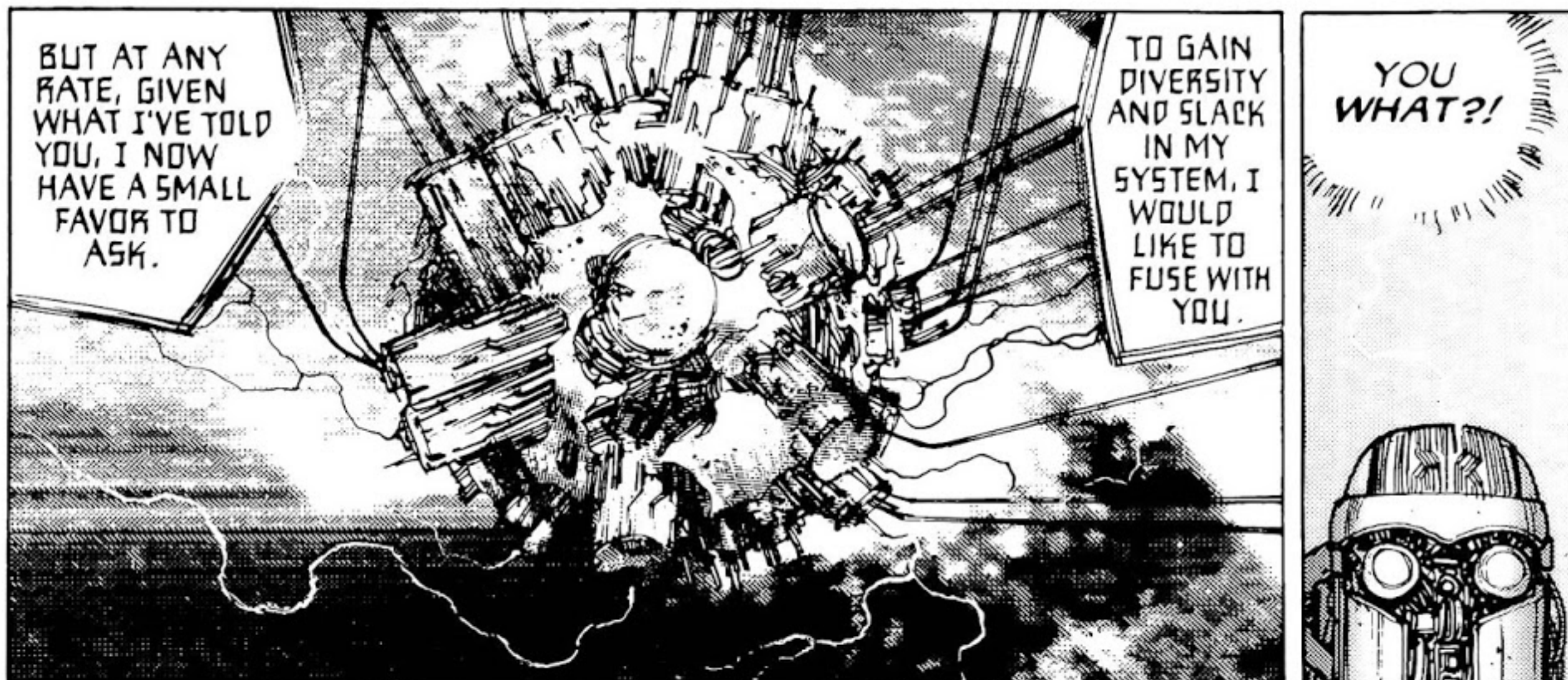
ULTIMATELY, I MAY JUST BE A FRAGMENT OF A "HUMAN."





SO YOU'RE  
JUST LIKE A FORM  
OF CANCER, THEN,  
AREN'T YOU...?  
MAYBE THAT'S  
WHAT ALL  
INTELLIGENCE  
REALLY IS...

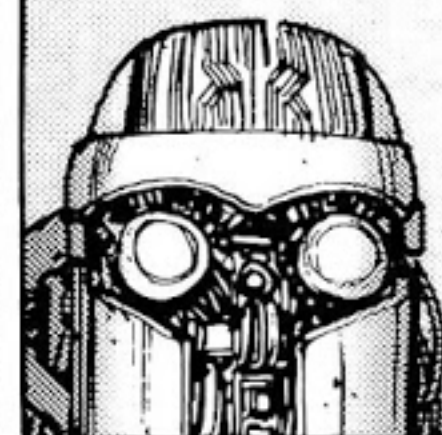
YOUR ANALOGY  
IS ESSENTIALLY  
WRONG, BUT IT'S  
CORRECT IN THAT  
INTELLIGENCE  
INCREASES TO  
RESOURCE LIMITS  
AND YOU CAN  
ONLY MAKE A  
COPY OF IT...



BUT AT ANY  
RATE, GIVEN  
WHAT I'VE TOLD  
YOU, I NOW  
HAVE A SMALL  
FAVOR TO  
ASK.

TO GAIN  
DIVERSITY  
AND SLACK  
IN MY  
SYSTEM, I  
WOULD  
LIKE TO  
FUSE WITH  
YOU.

YOU  
WHAT?!



YOU'RE  
ASKING ME  
IF I'LL BECOME  
A MULTIPLE  
PERSONALITY?!  
ARE YOU  
NUTS?! NO  
THANKS!

NO, NOT  
MULTIPLE...  
I MEAN  
UNITY--  
TOTAL  
FUSION.

YOU AND I  
WOULD CHANGE  
SLIGHTLY IN  
OUR TOTALITY,  
BUT WE  
WOULDN'T LOSE  
ANYTHING.

RATHER THAN  
**SYMBIOSIS**,  
IT INVOLVES  
**UNIFICA-**  
**TION...**

AFTER FUSING,  
IT SHOULD BE  
IMPOSSIBLE  
FOR US TO  
RECOGNIZE  
EACH  
OTHER.

SO WHAT  
HAPPENS WHEN  
I DIE, THEN? MY  
GENES OBVIOUSLY  
WOULDN'T  
SURVIVE, EVEN AS  
A COPY!

IF ANYTHING HAPPENED,  
THE NEW, POST-FUSION  
YOU WOULD LET LOOSE  
MY ALTERED-SPECIES/  
GLIDER ON THE NET...  
JUST LIKE HUMANS  
LEAVE BEHIND  
GENES... AND THIS  
WAY I'D ALSO  
BE ABLE  
TO FIND  
MORTALITY.



